Monologues of the Dead

G. W. Steevens.

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MEMORIAL EDITION

THE WORKS

OF

GEORGE WARRINGTON STEEVENS

VOL. VII.

Monologues of the Dead

MEMORIAL EDITION

OF

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Monologues of the Dead

BY

G. W. STEEVENS

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MCMII

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
TROILUS	1
ARIARAMNES	8
THEMISTOCLES	13
ALCIBIADES	20
XANTHIPPE	28
TIBERIUS GRACCHUS	35
CAIUS GRACCHUS	40
THE MOTHER OF THE GRACCHI	46
LUCULLUS	52
CÆSAR	58
BRUTUS	65
CICERO	71
MÆCENAS	77
AGRIPPA	85
AUGUSTUS	93

CONTENTS

CALIGULA 101

CLAUDIUS 107

NERO 112

VESPASIAN 118

TITUS 124

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT . . . 131

TROILUS

HECTOR is dead and I think shame to speak now of what passed between me and Cressid. Yesterday when I fought off the lesser Ajax from Deiphobus, Antenor called me the Sword of Troy, and the Sword of Troy I am. Boy, bring me my armour. What, sit here and prate of a wanton while spears whistle outside the gate? That is Paris's game, not mine. You say that Hector would have done well to listen to Cassandra, and stay at home that day? Then you lie, because Hector took but the chance of all brave men. And I am here now for Hector my brother. . . . Not that I am angry with Cressid. She was light—light and did after her lightness. Nay, I am even thankful to her. If she had not passed to Diomed I might yet be dallying in her chamber. It was that loss of her made me a man; and but for my strength and my going out every day where would Troy stand now? . . . Where is the boy and the armour? . . . Do not suppose

that I am afraid to speak of my bewitchment; I say I am now a strong man and can tell you of it without blenching; Cressid's gone clean out of my heart.

No, I am not afraid, but where tarries the armour? Well, I will tell you some part of the tale while I am waiting. The first time I clapped eyes on Cressida she was but two days come to Troy, because of the fear of the Greeks in the small towns. It was bright morning as I descended to skirmish with the advanced posts, and she came up to the Acropolis to sacrifice. I saw her in her fluttering white gown, and black curls drifting over her cheek that blushed rosier than the dawn. I have never said that she was not beautiful. As she looked sidelong one way and the other, half-smiling, her gaze lit on me, and her red lips bent into laughing outright. I stood, and saw the sun glint on the bosses of her sandals as she danced up the steps to the temple. I was green yet, and drank in the sight of her poisonous body like wine. From that hour there was nothing for me but cooling my sighs about Pandar's courtyard. About the streets of Troy I wandered with a great cavern in my breast. Nothing would glut my hunger but the presence of Cressida. . . . I speak calmly

but you must not think I am not ashamed of my mad—— But where, in the gods' name, is my armour gone? I am for Diomed to-day. It must be the buckles that Ajax shore off . . . Did I say I was ashamed of my love-sickness? Well, I am not. It has happened to all men to be silly over a woman. Not but what I was sillier than all men; you would not believe me if I told you how many whole nights I have lain on my bed weeping. Sometimes I would rush into the field—not often, for I had not heart for anything but my love—but then I would fight furiously till my limbs were like logs with weariness. But none the less I was racked hour by hour all the empty night. Sometimes I lay tense and breathless, for, who knew? (said I) she might come into the very room, as Helen did to Paris. And if I fell asleep for a while I would start up sweating at the voice of the sentinels passing the word on the terrace, and clutch at the white curtains, because I fancied that she was come at last. . . . Is it not strange how a man's strength is built up out of his weakness? . . . Yes—and how I fawned on that beast Pandar to give me sight of her, and how I writhed when she mocked me. . . . It is fool's talk . . . But since the armour still tarries I will make an end of

it. Though I cannot tell you of all the pain the witch put me to with her mincing coyness.

Ah! but when I came into Pandar's chamber, and felt the trembling sweetness of Cressida's body and Cressida's weak arms were clinging to my neck . . . It was the gods gave me one sight of heaven before they cast —— No. I would say that the gods showed me the best love had to give, so that I might be strong afterwards to think only of Troy. Set the armour down by the wall, boy: I will finish my story. But why need I tell you of my frantic passion, when Cressida was false? All Troy knows it. Though I am willing enough that this should be so, since Troy knows how I redeemed myself from that dishonour . . . Gods! the sting of that dishonour! To whistle me down the wind, the lover of one night! The gods blast her for it in her paramour's arms! Swaggering about the field still is he, with the sleeve, the lecherous braggart! Tell him from me I will lop it off, and his head with it. I will hack her face out of his rotten heart. And then I will tear the drab in pieces, and the pike of Scamander shall have their will of her . . .

No, do not stop me, I am calm now. I was not really angry; did I not tell you she was quite

gone out of my heart? It maddens me always to hear of treachery, whether the case be mine or another's. I will not speak of Cressid again. But two things I will tell you. It was that bitter day that opened my eyes, and I saw what a tragedy was being played on this stage of Troy. If women were false were not men base and proud, stupid and incontinent? There was the vain Agamemnon, the wind-bag Nestor, the brute beast Ajax, the wild beast Achilles—I will have his head yet for Hector's—the butt Menelaus and the fox Ulysses—all come to fight for a jade that would never lift her itching finger to draw one of them up out of Hell. And among us—what jigging, cockered fops were my brothers, all but Hector. Yes, and what was this great Hector himself, one day a bully, another day cringing at the skirt of Andromache? Weak, weak—it was all weakness and folly. But me the gods awoke.

I will tell you this also—the Sword of Troy can tell you now that at first it was just the mad lust of vengeance on Diomed that made me a soldier. I can say it unblushing now that I fight the Greeks in front all day for the City. . . . Yes, then it was Diomed, Diomed, all over the field . . . When shall I win back the sleeve, I wonder? I was for him to-day, but

to-day is wearing on, and I shall not sally out in the full heat. But this I can tell the knave: he will not keep the sleeve; and he will not keep the girl. She whets him with her wit to-day, she lulls him with her kisses; to-morrow she will be off to the next gull. Why, who knows but she will come back to me with her head down and her face all crimson? . . . Oh no, I will not take her back. A fine lesson for my lady when I turn my back on her . . . Well, her sorrows on her own head. The gods know how I would have loved her if she would but have held to her troth. I would have sucked in the honey of her lips, and Troy might be burnt ten thousand times, but I would not have unlocked my mouth and hers . . . I see you would say that woman is weak and this one was too much tempted. And it was Diomed that played the traitor. Let him come near me to-morrow—he and his sleeve! . . . Yet I do not know. When I fight with him, though I am very strong at the first strokes, I lose breath presently until I find myself in our ranks again. I cannot tell why it should be so. Maybe I cannot bear the insolence of his eye, because he has my mistress. Then they say he is the favourite of Pallas. Who am I—who is any man to fight a goddess? Me

certainly no god befriends, poor miserable wretch. . . . I told you, did I not, that I saw her yesterday? Yes, it was when I chased the Greeks back to the stockade. As I pressed on Ajax, I lifted my eyes, and she was on the wall by her father. There she stood as sure as it is I that speak to you—Cressida in the white robe and the heavy curls rolling. . . . Would you have called me weak, I wonder, if I had stared at her a little? But then Diomed saw me, and tossed his crest, and came down on me. . . . She waved him a kiss, and laughed. Her eyes are blacker and shinier than ever. . . . The old heaviness came over me; I am afraid I was beaten back by Diomed. It is too shameful. But how am I to fight against Pallas? She has a grudge against me, because I am in love. . . . No, I do not think I shall win back the sleeve. . . . Yet, by Aphrodite, I must, else she will not come back to me either. . . . My curse on Pallas, that makes him so stubborn! I am sure he thinks me a boy still . . . No, I shall never do it. O Cressida, Cressida! . . . Out of my sight, slave; I will teach you to spy on your master. Take away the trumpery armour. I will not fight to-day.

ARIARAMNES

ARIYARAMAN am I, the son of Akhamanish and the kinsman of Kurush the Great King, him whom the men of the West called Cyrus. Dead I am, and worse, being crippled and enslaved among the Massagetæ these many years, but through them all, I am sure, my deeds are not yet forgotten in Asia. For I strode beside Kurush the King when he led the Persians over the mountains into the plains of Media, and at his side I marched and conquered from that day till the day I came here. Over all the face of Asia, over the rolling rivers and the brown stones of the deserts and the green fields, we spread like an undammed flood, and all men scattered before us. We came first to Agbatana, that city perched on a hill, with its seven walls, black and white, orange and blue, scarlet and silver and gold, shining tier on tier in the young sun. Over the seven walls we scrambled into the citadel, and squeezed out of our boots the

blood of the Medes that called themselves our lords. Next we marched to Sardis, and clambered up the cliff into the city, and slew and plundered there also. Babylon too we sacked; we drained the river and plashed in through ooze and shingle till we came among the palaces of the city. And there we mixed the wine of their feasting with blood. So were we lords and kings, and their gold and sewed hangings and their balsams and myrrh we looted for our own, and their boys for eunuchs, and their delicate women for concubines. From the western sea to the Indian mountains all men cowered before us, and we herded them as sheep and oxen.

Yet at the last I came hither for no reason else than that to all men there comes the last battle. As we marched northward to war with the Massagetæ, remotest of all men, we could feel the very hand of death come down clammy over the army. Days we toiled on through a country that every day grew bleaker and unhomelier. In our first wars we had been wont to swing on in the sunshine through lands fair as a garden, stocked with every good thing, and all our prey. But here the sky was grey and it grew duskier as we went on, that at last we could see but a stretch into the

unknown before. The land was bare and barren and silent, but for streaks of bitter wind that screamed across it. As we went on ever northward, the more leaden the sky and the more leaden were our hearts, till we came to the great river Araxes. How there Tomyris the Queen of the Massagetæ sent to warn us out of her melancholy kingdom, and how we slaughtered the third part of her people by stratagem when they were drunk with our wine I need not stay to tell, for it is a small matter. Then she sent ambassadors again to bid us begone. And at that indeed the army began to quake horribly since she was still so grim and foreboding, although we had slain her men and with them her own son. They began to murmur and to beseech Kurush to obey and turn homewards into a kinder country. But he would not hear them. So we set our army over the river. We marched north and left Araxes great and grey behind us, floating, floating noiselessly under the dead sky between the mournful plains. We went on three days' journey to the appointed place and set our battle in order on the fourth day. Then we knew that our hour was surely come. We were at the sheer edge of the world. Before us rose up a wall of black sky half over the heaven,

like the jaws of a monstrous cave. All round, far and far on every side, spread nothing but the aching wilderness that smote wanly on our eyes under the half light. The air was salt and sickly on our lips, and clammy to our skin. And the most awful thing was the deadest silence everywhere, so that you could hear men turn cream-white. The host stood limp and chill, fearful to breathe and break the stillness. The masters of Asia who had streamed over all the world like wolves stood pale and hushed and trembling in the midst of the dim emptiness.

Out of the throat of the blackness began to grow and gather a long pale cloud. Men and horses gleamed like spectres out of the night. The nation of the Massagetæ came riding swiftly down upon us—hunched up on their horses, knee to chin, with one long lock of hair dancing against the sky. For a while we shot our arrows until the quivers were empty. Then they dashed at us, and we sprang out to meet them. They drove their lances crashing against us, and we swung out our sabres. Of all the fights I ever fought that was the fiercest and the weirdest. For there was no prize of victory but there were we, hacking furiously in the midst of that

desolation — we who were the lords of the world, and had fought with all the nations of Asia, and conquered, and grown rich, and they who dwelt on the edge of the earth and had nothing. That battle was fought all in silence but for the crash of arms and the thud of wounds. We hewed and hacked stoutly for the best part of the day, swaying back and forward, but all the time we knew well that we were all to die before the day was out. At last the battle rolled back from before me. I shook the blood from my eyes and saw that I stood by Kurush the King and a small company by us. We stood on a heap of our dead fellows. By now the blackness had climbed up and thickened over the whole heaven. The ring of Massagetæ stood like murky devils about us. No man spake a word. Then they surged up and swept over us. I saw Queen Tomyris tall and uprising and haggard for her son as she plunged at Kurush with her dirk. I felt a cold thrill slide up under my chest. I awoke and I alone was here in bondage, having outlived my kinsman, Kurush the Great King.

THEMISTOCLES

SET my face towards Athens. Give me a cushion for my head and leave me. Do the knaves dream I cannot see they are itching to be at the treasure? Before this night that unrolls itself from Susa is gathered up over Attica, I know that my book will be rolled up and sealed. How black it is heaving up overhead! And the waves that float down the sunset—they are blackening too and tossing and hissing, cold and uncomforting. Do you mock at Themistocles, now he is come to die, you who were his so trusty servants and allies? Has the grey sea forgotten so soon? Salamis is over there, and Artemisium and all the coasts where I fought in the old time, and sailed back into the roads of Athens with bays wreathed on my prow. Piræus is over there also, which I established with walls and wharves for the stronghold of the fleet. I set Athens on to the sea from the dry land: the sea was my bondman, and buoyed me up from great-

ness to greatness. And now—now the sea is my gaoler. It laps, laps, laps these stones at my feet, yet I may not sail my own Ægean, nor set foot on my own Piræus. Year by year I sit and peer over the flouting waves that trip over to plash on Sunium, and I sicken and sicken for the mandate of recall. Now it will come never. And I shall never see my country nor hear the voices of my own people. To-day is the Dionysia: they are filing up into the city this very moment, with the white robes and the flutes and the dear green garlands I shall never see again. I shall die here quite alone. Already the heat has gone out of me: I sit here and wait for death and derision. I that made Athens shall die in this strange land, in cold neglect and loneliness. And the Athenians will hear of it and spit on the ground and say, "Well rid of a traitor!" and fall to laughing again.

Well rid of a traitor! O the scalding remembrance of that shame! O the vileness of the day when I sneaked back into Athens to know if they were surely resolved of my doom! Then, when I crept out again, muffled, at nightfall, to Piræus, to escape from my own people to our enemy the King! The West was all a belt of saffron as it is to-day, and the sprightly

figures of the Athenians threw long swaying shadows by the Long Walls. As I sidled hastily in the shade of the walls I knew they were talking of me. "Dog Themistocles," "Fox Themistocles," "Weasel Themistocles" — I heard it all round me; I stopped my ears and it rang the more importunately. I stole stealthily on: my heart was a stone and my belly a pit, and I never dared look straight at one of those men whom I had made. There were the Athenians, whom with my own wit I lifted from nobodies to emperors, walking at ease in the cool and I sweating like a guilty slave and knowing myself all in a moment far meaner than the meanest of them. Then there came one towards me in the eye of the sun, and methought the turn of his head was not strange to me. And O how I started and winced when I knew him for Aristides! Aristides the great, simple, stupid child! Aristides so just and so helpless, whom I had scoffed at for a dolt to his face! He was smiling as he passed gravely, and the citizens all saluted him. Then he glanced aside and his eyes flashed into mine. He knew me; my heart flung up in rage and hate. But he only passed by more gravely; and I knew that he knew me and spared me and pitied me.

O gods! O gods of Olympus! But no; no gods of Olympus can be gods of mine now. I suppose I must call on Ormazd, if I wish to swear. Epaphroditus! Epaphroditus! Curse him! I must not let them see I am dying, or no more service for me. . . . Epaphroditus! Straighten this pillow and pull back the tapestries; it is getting so dark. Set the syrup to my hand. . . . And Aristides is lying in his armour on some bleak shore, pondering in his stupid golden head the stale plan that will bring him a new victory to-morrow! It is always the same plan with him, and it is always the same victory. And for me—for me there was the pirate skipper, with his "Ha, ha, Themistocles! You rated me at Artemisium for backwardness. My turn now, my boy; my turn now! But I'll get you off, never fear. Be what you will, you once saved Hellas—I'll save you." And the sneer of the satrap when I came before him as a suppliant—I that had conquered him once, and again, and again! The dallying down here at the coast: because, forsooth, I was not yet fit to look on the King, and his alms for my keep and the learning the tongue of his slaves! His pundits laughed in my face that the wise Themistocles should be so inapt a scholar. But every new

word was a new devil, screeching in my ear that one more strand was cut between me the slave, and me the man. And now I sit here, trousered and turbaned, and plot and plot, and betray all, and am betrayed by all! O how can I ever have dared to stand up and speak, face to face, to the very mob of Athens? Ha! who's there? Why, Epaphroditus, what is it? I was dreaming. Hiero is ready to start for Sparta? Let him start. I know he will be refused, and then I can ruin the ephors with Artaxerxes. . . . O, and this is what I am come down to—to compass the slavery of my own fatherland by the wiles of this lying Carian! Why, Xerxes was a stouter man than I! For he, at least, could speak an open word and strike. . . .

Bah! I must be dying indeed when I grow such a fool. And truly my head is swimming, and I think the sun must be gone clean down, everything is so dark. Bah! But it is pardonable, I suppose, in these days for a man to forget there is such a thing as wits in the world. I have been unfortunate, but I have not been a fool. What did I care for Hellas? I saved her by accident. I worked for Athens. I taught the Athenians to fight Persia. Why, I taught them so well that they banned me for

letting Persia go when it was time to fight Sparta! They drove me out, but it is they who will rue it, not I. One day Sparta and Persia will grind them to powder: they will remember Themistocles then! But I—how am I worse off than Aristides? They tell me he too is old and weakening; moreover he is poor. Then they call him the Just. But I could have been called the Just if I had pleased: not that I was, but I could have feigned to be. Then he gets what he will, but I have failed in all things. Yet I would not be Aristides, nor any man except Themistocles. For have I been unfortunate after all? I have lived, indeed, among fools, yet so must all men. And the fool is the clay from which the wise man fashions himself. I moulded myself a soldier out of the folly of Hellas, and a statesman out of the jealousy of Sparta, and a philosopher out of the ingratitude of Athens. And now I am going to finish by conquering likewise the suspicions of Artaxerxes. It is so dark, and the blood is so humming round my ears that it cannot last long. Epaphroditus! Commend my children to the King, and say I send my bones to be buried without the gates of his palace. But send in truth the bones of any man rather than mine. He will find in the

sealed roll my plan for the subjugation of Hellas—but he will never execute it. Smuggle my bones over, and bury them in my dear Attica. And thou, Epaphroditus, bend nearer —nearer yet—they must not hear—perhaps my sons may desire rather to live as Athenians; but do not take over my real bones there either. An empty sarcophagus will serve, and win the old party votes enough at the next election. Bury me, therefore, where you will, so that no man may know where he may stand over me and say he is at last as wise as Themistocles. I have contrived it in my will that you shall be paid if you do my pleasure, but not else.

ALCIBIADES

HEIGHO! Oh-h-h! Dear, dear! What a scandalous head I've got. I'm a decorous person for a general, I must say. O gods, what a glory of sunlight! See how it swims through the haze over the harbour! And, Zeus! look there at the flagship and the shining purple of my ensign. Ah! that dazzling, dancing little streamer—that's Alcibiades. The captains are waiting in my pavilion for the council of war, are they? Been waiting half-an-hour? Let them in. . . . Good-morning, gentlemen. To-morrow we fight a decisive action with Lysander. My squadron and Diomedon's—forty ships—put out of harbour at nightfall; give out we are for the Hellespont after contributions. Lysander rows across from Miletus to-morrow morning to get his gain of my absence, as he did last time, when I left you in charge, Antiochus, you drunken fool. It will be hazy, as it is to-day. You engage; I slip out from the back of the island and cut

him off from the sea. We drive him to land and take the whole fleet: another Cyzicus! The land troops have all crossed to the mainland to-night. In the morning during the sea fight they surprise Miletus. Ships ours, town ours—the war's over . . . What's that noise at the tent door? A deputation from the town council of Colophon to come over to our party and propose we occupy the town! Admit the town council of Colophon. How do you do, town council of Colophon? I understand you wish to come over. I feel that very magnanimous on the part of Colophon. Also, you want me to send you over a garrison? Well, when I have finished this council of war, been washed, oiled, scented, frizzed and clothed, spent a little while with my friends, interviewed a little dancer I've discovered, written my despatches, matched six of my cocks against the gentlemen of Samos, composed a speech to move the Ephesians to give us money, won a decisive battle or two, brought the King to his knees, written a tragedy, and done a few more things I've got in hand—why, then, it just occurs to me you won't be worth garrisoning. Good-bye, town council of Colophon . . . Now, captains, I give you just five minutes to shake your heads over me and my plan. Rash?

Unquestionably. Against all the rules of war? Just why I do it. Nicias would never have done it? I flatter myself he would not. I believe you think it the unpardonable sin to fight more than one big battle in a summer. Why, look you here, gentlemen. Five-and-twenty years and more we've been at this stupid war. Well, I say life's not long enough for it. I'm going to squash Sparta under my hand to-morrow, so! as I squash this cockchafer. What's that you're muttering, Diomedon? I hope your father, the auctioneer's clerk, spoke clearer than you do. We shall want the land troops to occupy the beach? Rubbish! Our beach we shan't need; on their's we can land from the ships. Lysander won't play the same game twice? My worthy old Diomedon, if ever you are in big command, take my advice and learn your opponent. Lysander's such a knave that he thinks every honest man's a fool. Not that I'm a particularly honest man either, but anyhow I'm no fool. What, more objections! No, really, worthy captains, you begin to bore me. The forty ships sail at sundown: the other squadrons clear for action at sunrise to-morrow.

Don't go, Antiochus; sit down while he dresses me. I prophesy you feel rather like

a stale wine-skin this morning. Where's that girl I picked up—what's her distinguished name? Phryne! yes, Phryne it was. Phryne! Come here, sweetheart, and sit down by my knee. I'm damned if I know how you came here last night; I suppose I must have mistaken you for Clytie. You're a pretty little dear, Phryne, only I don't quite perceive why you're blushing. I don't mind, understand; in fact, I think it becomes you very well; I only say—O, that's it! You don't know me! Then let me introduce myself. I am Alcibiades of Athens—late of Sparta and elsewhere. I am extraordinarily noble and wonderfully gifted, and on the whole virtuous. That I believe to be a succinct account of myself, though I ought to tell you in justice that other people, influenced doubtless by jealousy—Who's there? The officer in command of the land forces has the honour to inform me he is waiting for my instructions? I have the honour to inform him my instructions are to wait. Well, little love, what's making you giggle? Because I kiss you on the ear? Why, that's the latest Athenian fashion; you must really try and live up to modish surroundings. Well, I was telling you, I'm Alcibiades, a bad, but clever young man who has been younger than he is. He has

frequently been drunk, and to-morrow he is going to be immortal. Yes, immortal, pretty chuck. I'm going to do what Pericles couldn't do, and what Brasidas couldn't do, and what I've never done before myself. Kiss me, love. Really, Phryne, you are too provincial altogether in your style of kissing. Here, Antiochus, take her away and teach her the rudiments of love-making. I don't see why I should be bothered with the education of every piece of flesh that's set with bottomless eyes. Take her away.

Tell Antiphilus I'll give him his orders for the land army at the cock-fight. No, don't take the cocks to the pit yet; I shall be coming in a moment. Tell Antiochus to come back. . . . Antiochus, I talk to you, not because you can understand me, but because I've no one else to talk to. Antiochus, to-day I put an end to these twenty-five years of war. I'm tired of it; it's too little for me. I shall wipe out Lysander, and I shall wipe out Miletus. Then I'll go and talk round that boy Cyrus, and they'll give out for want of money. I fancy I see my friend King Agis when I go down to Sparta to dictate a peace. Perhaps he'll be sorry then he chose to be a pedant about his wife, hey? This war out of the way, I go

back to Sicily. Then to Spain, and with Spain I conquer Carthage. Then to sweep up Italy, and down over the necks of the Illyrians and Perdiccas. And it's not so very far from Pella to Susa. I think men will remember Alcibiades, son of Clinias, for a year or two after that. Antiochus, I shall do it. I feel it lapping round me in every breath of this heavenlike summer. Do you see the waves pacing in and bowing down in front of Alcibiades? O, how great, how great it is to feel myself great! O gods! how godlike to feel myself a very god!

Now then, wake up, Antiochus, and come to the cock-fight. Don't try to look as if you understood me; look at the birds. Doesn't it do you good to see them? I think the gentlemen of Samos will be some talents poorer to-night, hey? Now don't throw that scroll on the ground, you ox! Do you know what that is, Antiochus? That's a tragedy I'm going to show at the next Dionysia. Such a jest; you'll burst, my good Antiochus, with Chian wine and laughing. All the characters but one are gods, and the one's Thersites. When everything's in a knot, Thersites comes on to the theologeion at the end to compose the divine squabbles. That'll make my friends the priests wriggle a bit on their fat cushions. Just look here at

these lines. Rather effective before all Athens, hey? You might copy it out fair for me, one of these days, as you can read my writing. Thanks, trusty Antiochus. You are most amiable. You never mind how much work I give you to do as long as I never make you do it.

Who's there? What? Sunset already! O gods and goddesses, there go my five talents, and I haven't written my despatches or done anything. Where's Antiphilus? At the cock-pit, twenty stades away? Sent a fleet rider after him instantly and another to the troops to get under arms in an hour. We must weigh at once or the spies won't see us. Look at the white-winged ships getting under sail, the dear beautiful enticing harlots! And that wall of live amber against the masts! That's the golden glory for my head to-morrow. What's that just put in at the quay? The despatch packet from Athens, if I know her. I wonder what the dirty democrats have got to say this time. Give me the tablets; I believe I'm general-admiral. "The Athenian people to Alcibiades son of . . ." O furies! O earth and hell! O, plague rot the beasts! . . . Ha, ha, ha! I'm not general-admiral after all, it seems . . . Superseded by Styx! Superseded, when to-morrow I was to do the filthy dogs the best turn of their

lives! A board of ten and Diomedon for the interim command! Where's Diomedon? O yes, I knew you would be somewhere near, You, you, you're commander here, you morning star of war, and you're a blockhead and a timorous fool to boot, if it's any service to you to know. Take the fleet and the army to hell, inspired Diomedon, by all means. You'll find me there to welcome you. Here, where are my people? Get out a pinnace. Yes, there goes Antiochus, of course, licking his new master's broken boots. I sail to-night for my castle in the Chersonnese. And this is the cursed government I was idiot enough to save four years gone! Put the girls aboard—that new girl Phryne with them. Three or four of you go into the city and offer the rhapsode—the tolerably good rhapsode; you know him, I suppose, dolts?—offer him a talent to come too. If he won't, carry him. He shall recite me the Wrath of Achilles. Ha, ha! Run her out there, lads, handsomely, handsomely.

XANTHIPPE

WHAT? You want me to tell you about poor Socrates, sir—you too? Dear, dear, what's the matter with all the people? Nothing but Socrates, Socrates, Socrates, morning, noon, and night, week in, week out, until I'm sick of the name. The man might come to life again, and he couldn't give me more trouble. And I getting an old woman now—eight and sixty years, come next Dionysia. You'd think I might have a little peace after the life he led me. Yes, he was a bad husband to me, poor Socrates was. It was no fault of mine I married him, but my father—you wouldn't have known my father; Peithon of Acharnæ his name was; he was a councillor, and had fifteen or twenty slaves about the farm, I should reckon; I didn't even know all their names. Well, I didn't want to marry Socrates; the look of him was quite enough for me. I wanted to marry Euthybulus; their people used to know our people. His uncle took him into partner-

ship at the Piræus, and when the old man died he got the business to himself, bank and ships and all. Oh, he's made talents out of it in his time, if he's made an obol—you mark my words.

Well however, they made me marry Socrates. It isn't what a young maid wants, you know; it's what the men choose. Always the same way—a man the master and a woman the slave. But you may imagine what a load I had to carry with a man like that about the house. Always mooning, he was, looking down at his toes or up at the sky. And always mumbling to himself about squares and names and music and things till you couldn't get a word out of him. And always getting in the way of work, and we too poor to keep more than one slave-girl. I that had been accustomed to twenty or thirty! Little he cared. Lazy? Zeus, you couldn't get that man to work. He'd about all day in the gymnasia talking about the gods know what nonsense, stuffing green heads with no good, you may be quite sure, when he got hold of sparks like Glaucon and Alcibiades and the rest of them. I can't make out for the life of me what the young gentlemen saw in him, to be always about with him. Why couldn't he keep to folks of his own station? They told

me before I married he was a stonemason or something of the sort, but I never saw any stonemasoning about him for one. And me slaving for him all the while and working my fingers to the bone to keep the house and children respectable. Yes, and him too. Why, do you know it was all I could do to keep that man's clothes—but there, you say you saw him once or twice, Sir. I'll warrant he was going about with no sandals on and his tunic in rags. His eating nothing but dry bread I didn't mind, but when it came to going into the market-place with a tear in his tunic as big as a good-sized fig! What did he care if people said: "There goes Xanthippe's husband. A nice state she lets him go about in?" Many a good cry I've had about it, I don't mind owning. I got ashamed to go into the street at last for fear everybody should point at me.

What say? You must talk loud to me; my hearing's not what it was. Didn't I love him at all? Well, I did my duty as a wife. Nobody can look me in the face, and say I didn't do my duty as a wife. But it was hard to be fond of such a trial. What would you do now if your man came hanging round you, very glum and serious, when you were worried with washing his tunic, and get talking to himself how a

person's soul was like wool? And then going on and on talking about souls and things he might have left to gentlemen like Pericles that made speeches in the Assembly and understood things like that. Then to tell his own wife that her soul was a lie or something! That was too much for me. I remember, I gave him the rough side of my tongue. Did I empty the wash-tub over him? Well, I don't know; it would have served him right, but I can't call to mind rightly whether I did that day. I jumble up things so in my mind like. . . . Now just to show you what I had to put up with. You'd hardly remember that war they had up Thrace way, in Pericles's time. Well Socrates went out—bought his panoply with my dowry, too, he did—and the story went they had a battle there, and Socrates saved Alcibiades from being killed by the Thrace people. And a good day for Athens, too, if all they say's true, if he had let him be killed. But however, I saw Socrates coming through the house door, with a garland on his head and a troop of young gentlemen following him and cheering as if he had been a ship's captain at least—and many a time have I seen him since come home with a garland from drinking at Agathon's or Crito's and setting a bad

example to the young men. But however, I never had a thought of that then. Sophroniscus had been born while he was away and that made me feel warm to him like. And there was something homely after all about his face, pug-nose and all. Well, that evening I loved him. I remember it as well as if it had been yesterday. I had stewed a kid for supper with garlic; you get the relish of it better, if you do it that way. Well, as we were having supper in the court of the house—it was summer; if you leaned back you could see the figs getting streaked against the blue sky till your eyes got dazzled. "Well," I said to Socrates, "you must eat some garlic or else I won't." He said "Why?" He was always asking why. I said, "Because," and then he laughed at me. That hurt me like. I began to get afraid it wasn't going off as well as I thought it would. So I got up, and put my arms round his great hairy neck, and said, "Socrates, I love you." Then he laughed again, and said, "Why do you love me, Xanthippe?" Then I got all hot and flustered, because he laughed at me again. I could never bear being laughed at by a man. But for all that I answered him quite civilly, just as I might answer you. I said, "Because I do." Then he laughed again. But I didn't

give him up: I know as well as anybody what a help it is when there's love between husband and wife. I just knelt down by him and pulled down his head and kissed his mouth. Then I whispered, "Do you know why I wouldn't eat garlic unless you did? If we both eat it, it doesn't smell when we kiss." And what did that beast do? He just got up, and pushed me away, and began to walk up and down the court. Beast, I call him. Yes, beast! beast! Then he mumbled something out of the play about "Woman, women ought not to talk." I like that, the beast! The sort of thing that crab-apple Thucydides used to say, that they talk so much about . . . Well, and then you know what he did when he was in prison. You must know that, because Plato put it in a book. I don't like Plato; he stares so hard and steady at you, just like Socrates used to, till you don't know where to look. But about the prison; you know what he did the last night? Gossiped with his young men, and me and the boys outside, crying our eyes out. Well, then, when we went in, I just burst out, bad husband and all as he'd been to me, I couldn't help it. Any wife worth the name would have done the same in my place. Then what does he do, the cruel wretch, but have me sent away—carried out by

his men friends, I trouble you. You wouldn't catch me crying for him again. Then dying without leaving me an obol! If it hadn't been for Plato, we should have all starved, and he did about as little for us as he well could.

What say? I've forgotten the most important thing about him? Well, I like that. If his own wife didn't know him, who should, I'd like to know? A philo—what? A philosopher! Ah, I don't know; I can't tell you anything about that.

TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

OH, no; I am not really down-hearted; you mustn't think that, indeed. I am quite confident that our cause will succeed. Do you not think so yourselves? Why, surely it is the just and it cannot fail. Yes, and I am quite confident of myself too. Honestly, I am trying to do my very best by all the interests in the commonweal. I do so wish I could make the landholders see that. It cannot be good for the State that the Laws of Licinius should be violated by hundreds and nobody ever even notice it. And if it is bad for the State, how can it be good for a class? The very best captain cannot navigate a plague-stricken ship. But this seems all so new to the senators—in itself, mark you, a sign how deep the disease has grown in. Yes, I should like to put that view of it before the Senate, but I'm afraid I shan't have time to prepare by the day after to-morrow. Look, here comes Lucilius's runner. A note for me? Hm! Nasica won't meet me

at dinner; afraid he'll break up the party. Tell Lucilius I shall stay away, then. I suppose Nasica will permit me to dine at home with my wife. Now, can you understand what a man's mind can be like to let a political difference run away with his manners so? It is un-Roman. What do they all mean by it, these senators? Why should they bar me, as you young men say? Oh, yes, I know I'm young myself in a way, but somehow I never seemed so young as you, Flaccus. But why do they? I don't like to be disliked, and I do wish I knew why. They know I'm not a vulgar demagogue. My family's good enough, and if I may say so, my character is fairly good too; I am not dishonourable nor impious nor profligate. I think my character's as good as Nasica's, isn't it? Stop, there is Nasica. Let us cross the road. No, no, Flaccus, no unpleasantness, if you please. Well, what have they against me? It sounds indecent to say so, but I've fought for Rome and distinguished myself as much as Nasica, anyhow. Nobody can say I have any personal end to serve. What? A tyranny! No, I will not believe it. I will never believe that any man of old Roman name could whisper that slander. Never say that again, please, if we are to remain friends.

They'll kill me? Kill me for trying to rejuvenate the State? Really, how very absurd you are. Don't you know there hasn't been one drop of blood shed in intestine strife by Romans since Ahala, and that was for disobeying the summons of the Dictator.

Well, here we are at the meeting—late, too. Why, Carbo must be perorating already. He speaks with a swing, doesn't he? What! I to speak next! Alas, I shall never get my points conned over before Carbo is done. Flaccus, do, for the gods' sake, speak while I con over. I wish Carbo would be a little more moderate in his language. I'm not at all sure I like this new fashion of street meeting—our grandfathers would hardly have thought it very dignified. Though certainly it's a great help to our side—to our associates I should rather say. Ah! he's done; I'm rather glad. Now, Flaccus, be as long as you like, only, whatever you do, don't be provocative. Who is that they are clamouring for? Me? Oh, dear, I haven't got my speech ready at all. I shall only just talk to them for a minute. Carbo, I congratulate you. Is it a good meeting? I do hope there won't be any interruption. Now . . .

Romans, Carbo has spoken to you with a warmth I cannot altogether deprecate of the

policy of certain senators towards the Land Restoration Bill. Nevertheless, you must not infer from thence any ill-will, at least on our side, against the Senate or against any class of the community whatever. For the great object which we pursue is one which should—nay, which will, I am confident of it—rally every Roman to one heart and soul. The glorious days of our country have gone back and back into the past until there is none living in whom they are so much as a personal recollection. But, in the story of Rome, the memory of the heroes that won our empire stands immovable and eloquent for ever. Where are they gone, then, these heroes—these sons of the sword and of the plough? Their children are found in the alleys of the city, landless and swordless, and slaves drive cattle over their fathers' farms. Only from the earth our mother, Romans, shall be got the strength to hold the world as we have held it heretofore. Let us all band ourselves together then. Let those who hold land unlawfully, even though innocently, give it up. Let the landless take spade and mattock, and go forth to their allotments. So shall we become again the hardy, god-fearing, loving, invincible people that our fathers were. It is a high and a holy purpose, citizens. We have

set ourselves to set up our country anew, and we will build on steadfastly through all till she is set up again, strong and worshipful as of old.

Just a word to hearten them and keep them from faction. What? What did I hear you say, Bloxius? Octavius means to veto my bill? Why, that means either the Bill goes or the Constitution. Yes, I see all that it means. It means ruin to my life. Friends, what shall I do, what shall I do? O gods, it is a heavy burden you lay on me. But come—let us go home and talk it all over quietly.

CAIUS GRACCHUS.

YES, and these are the men that killed my brother, that murdered my dear brother Tiberius, the Tribune of the People, your friend. Men of Rome, do you see the sun going down over Janiculum? Just so that very sun went down eleven years gone on the evening when they slew Tiberius. Because he loved Rome they slew him, these bloody butchers. Because he loved you, because he thought and wrought day and night that your children might come to their birthright, because he loved all men and was gentle and meek with the very senators, because he fought for Rome and strove to make her strong and happy and free. O men of Rome, what was his reward? I tell you I saw it with these eyes in the slant of that setting sun as it slants now. Is there no one here that marked him hold up his arm to be heard? Yes, they beat it down with a bench —gods, I can hear the crack of it! They smashed and gashed his head with clubs, they

kicked him and spat on him, they hauled him by the hair through these streets of Rome, they lifted him in their bloody arms—these villains, too foul to touch the hem of his robe, and pitched him into the Tiber. Laughing and jeering they flung him in—my brother; they flung the holy Tribune of the People like a log into the river. I say I saw the yellow waves leap up and swallow him; I saw thick streaks of blood ooze in the water. And I stood by unhelpful, and I must go home to my mother and tell her I was the last of her house, the last of the sons she had borne and bred with pain and tenderness. And my mother! O, my miserable mother! Romans, forgive me. I know you will forgive me because you also saw. Yes, you saw as I saw; you stood by as I. I was one, but you were many. I was his brother but you too were his brothers, for he loved you and gave you his life. You stood by and saw him battered and bludgeoned to a clod of flesh and blood, and not one of you lifted a finger to save your friend. Is it so you will always repay those that wish you well? Will you let them break my bones, too, because I am trying to give you bread to eat? Am I to go to my brother and tell him that the Romans are for ever ungrateful? Well, I tell you I will do that

sooner than that I will yield. I will be no slave, not I. I was born a free Roman, and I will die one. But doubtless you prefer to be the slaves of these men. You know them, these young nobles; you see them every day. You see them swagger through the street, you hear their insolent, loud voices, and cringe aside when they pass by and shaven slaves elbow you into the gutter. Your fathers brought them in chains to Rome and you cower and let them thrust you aside lest your breath should meet my lord's. Outside Rome these Spaniards and Africans carry thongs to flay honest men that will not curtsey to their drunken lords. Bah! you deserve it! You are the worse slaves of the two, you,—you free Electors of Rome. Do you know that it is your land they live on and wax insolent. Yes, it is yours, yours, every perch of it—your pheasants and ortolans that they eat, your Chian wines they drink, your slaves, your horses, your Syrian girls. They buy them all with your toil, they eat your pith and drink your blood and tears. Grass crawls over the hearth-stones where your grand-dames span and your fathers played, and on your fathers' farms the walls are broken, and the fields a wilderness, and there roam only cattle and barbarous slaves that these noblemen may live in luxuriousness.

And you are pent up in the crooked alleys of Rome, and you go hungry and cold, and they laugh at the rents in your robes. Yes, they laugh: these insolent banditti mock at the misery of the men they thrive on. O men of Rome, for your children's sake, help me and let us be avenged. Down on my knees I pray you, pity me, pity my dead brother, pity yourselves, pity our sad-eyed wives and wailing children. We have borne the yoke until our necks crack. Will you not, I say? Say that you will! Yes, for I know you; you are Roman yet. We will despoil our despoilers; they are beginning to tremble, these murderers of their fellow-citizens. What will their riches profit them? Their feasts and flutes, their dances and their house darlings, their dandy notes and jewels and litters, their sneers and jokes, their whips and bludgeons—what will they avail them now? What will they avail them—Ha! The wolves of Rome are at their throats, and let him shake them off who can! . . .

Yes, my mother, I know what you will say. I am too violent, I stir up civic hatreds. You are going to speak of my father and of yours, and of Æmilianus, who all drew Romans together and conquered her enemies. I have told all this to myself, many times. I know

you do not know yourself what I am doing. Mother, mother, do not be angry with me if I tell you. No, put your head closer. Mother, I am tearing to pieces the Republic. Do not say no; I know it. I see it very well. There will never be a free Rome again. The people have tasted blood. When I am gone, they will look for another to feed them, and then another and another. There will be a king in Rome again, after all these years of citizens. All Romans will be his slaves; he will walk through the forum with his guards; he will fill the Senate with his minions; he will kill rich men for their riches, and fling great men down precipices for an honest word. O mother, and I shall have done that. When I go hence, my clansmen and yours will draw up their gowns strangely and turn from me. I shall be all alone there mother, as I am all alone now. No man loves me; you yourself do not love me. Oh, and mother—Tiberius, Tiberius will hate me too. Tiberius carried me all over the farm at Tusculum when I could not yet walk, and gave me a sword and taught me to fight the enemy and love Rome. He will say when I come there: "I was murdered for freedom; you murdered her." And then he will look scornfully on me and turn from me also . . .

Yes, I know it, and I shall go on. Where was the free Republic when they killed the Tribune of the People? O mother, whenever I speak to the people I see Tiberius with his brain running out at his ears, and then I am mad. I know not what I say, but I see the people, and I know that I am destroying, murdering. And when I am not speaking I always feel him pressing at the back of my head and screwing me forward. Yes, and he comes to me. Mother, mother, cannot you feel it! He is coming now! Ah, there, do you not see? You must see—there, by the curtain; the blood will stain it. Tiberius, speak to me. Yes, yes, I will do it. I am doing it. I am always doing it. Do not be angry with me, darling Tiberius, I swear it, you shall be avenged. Do not come again, my brother, I cannot bear it. Trust me, trust your dear Gaius, and do not come back to look at me. Yes, I know I have been idle—I have waited too long, but it shall all be done. Yes, this year, this month. O, but spare me now. Brother, brother—Ah-h!

Forgive me, dear mother. I was stupid; but I am overworked. Now let me go to meet the committee.

THE MOTHER OF THE GRACCHI

BID Dirce come to me at once. Draw the awning closer; this sun is intolerable. The butler wishes to know if he may have the key of the cellar? Of course he may not have the key of the cellar. He should well know by now that I never let any of the keys out of my keeping. I will tell him what wine we drink to-day at the proper time. It is so trying, do you not think, to have to train new servants? I never do it if I can by any means get quit of it. Almost every one of my people has been born in the family. It makes things go so much better; then they know the ways of the house. Philo, you must keep the farm slaves to a long day's work this evening, and take care they do not shirk. I am so afraid the weather may break. Did you notice the wheat as you came along the road? If we get it in safely this will be the best harvest since the year after my husband died. I use nothing but our own corn here; no foreign flour ever has lain in my bins.

Dirce, see that after the maidens are done in the field they are set to spinning. They are always letting the work slip through their fingers these hot days. I shall spin with them for an hour in the evening as usual. In half an hour I shall be ready to go through the accounts. That will do.

You see how much there is to manage even in a little shanty like this. When my husband was alive, of course there was very much more. I can assure you, my good sir, that you have no conception how much work there is to be done in a large house in Rome. We used to have the place in the Quirinal that Lucullus rents now. Then in the summer I lived a great deal at our villa near Tibur. Of course, I need not say that when Gracchus was on foreign service I always tried to be at his side; I think that is the true place for a wife. But when the children were young it was much better for them to be in Italy than tumbling about all day with a rout of provincial guttersnipes. I feel so keenly that if mothers would but take care what companionship their children fall upon, Rome would be a cleaner town to-day than I fear it is. I disapprove of fosterage altogether; I nursed all my children myself, as a true mother should. Thirteen I bore—twelve boys and Sempronia

—and I lost ten of them young, seven before they were weaned. Oh, yes, I assure you you have no conception what governing a large house means. Some days I was so busied I really was driven to give up my half hour with Ennius. I think you are a votary of our Ennius? Let me counsel you to give a certain time to him each day; I have done so forty years with the greatest profit. Of course, I need not tell you that I used to see Ennius very often when he was staying at my father's house in Campania. How rich in noble thought he was, how fertile of divine phrases! *Non cauponantes bellum*—of course you know the passage by heart. Yet he never for a moment forgot himself or presumed—so different from the underbred men of letters of to-day!

Will you not shift your chair further back? I am so afraid you will feel this terrible sun. Yes, indeed, the things that had to be done at Tibur came crowding in so, one upon another, that I had to go days at a time without my Ennius. But through all the daily cares, I never, never missed my hour's conversation with Tiberius and Gaius. I gave all my life up to them. I was resolved that none of my children should drop out of the Annals of Rome, if a mother's love and training could do anything to fit them

to play their parts with credit on this stage of life. Such was my endeavour, and the good gods heard me. Sempronia I married to the first man in Rome. But I do not speak so much of Sempronia. Indeed, to speak to you quite frankly and in confidence, Sempronia gave me too much anxiety. Even as a little girl I was driven to punish her—and you may estimate how it stung me—because she would ever be tumbling about my bosom in public. Then her behaviour to Scipio was not at all to my liking. All Rome knew they disagreed. I positively trembled with apprehension every time I saw a litter come into the courtyard; every day came a new story of some unbeseeming word that Sempronia—my daughter Sempronia—had flashed out at her husband. But of Tiberius and Gaius I need never blush to call myself the mother. You know it is as the mother of the Gracchi I was always desirous to be known, and they tell me that so I am. Indeed, sir, I am proud of both my sons whatever they may say of them in the saloons of the City. At least I do not think they will deny that they were both honourable Roman gentlemen. Not one moment of their boyhood went by but I knew where they were, what they were doing, with whom. And nobly they repaid me. Never

did they give me cause for one moment's anxiety. They tell me—I know nothing of such doings—how terribly dissipated and corrupt our young men are growing. None can say that of Tiberius and Gaius. They were never mixed up in any scandal. They were never so much as accused of extortion. I had set my heart on their taking each office the first year the law allows, and they did so. They were both to be tribunes, and they were. Of course I must tell you without any affectation we Gracchi are Plebeian, and have only been for two generations a consular family. I myself, of course, was a Scipio—of the best people in Rome. Still, just then the tribunate was becoming very much better form—you will pardon me the slang phrase—a great many of the best young men went into it. Then every one said my sons were the most eloquent orators in Rome. I liked dear Tiberius best; I was always afraid Gaius would strain himself when he declaimed so passionately. Do I deplore their death? Sir, I should do shame to the bent of all my life if I did! I could have wished they had fallen on the field—Tiberius, you remember, won a garland at Carthage—and I could have wished they had not taken so strong a part—Gaius especially—against the Senate. Of course

they were the only two of our people that had not been senators for generations back. But I know nothing of politics; I hold that a woman's true sphere is the home. They may say what they like about my sons: I am proud to be pointed to as the mother of the Gracchi.

Now, the accounts. First of all, the kitchen. Six bushels of wheat flour; yes. What is this next? Two jars of olive oil broken yesterday? By whom? Very well, then Chiron must be flogged. You had better bring up some more from the store-room; I never like to run short of oil. Tell Philo to be sure and remember to flog Chiron some time this afternoon.

LUCULLUS

EAT confidently, good friends: Lucullus has lived in vain if he need apologise for his prawns. But in heaven's name drink no more of that wine; let us at least dine symphonically. Our Polycles weds shell-fish with the grape of Arcadia; do you remember, Mamercus, how we worked through that immortal Third Chapter together? He could hardly have foreseen how far we should get ahead of him with this vintage of Gaul. Yes, gentlemen, I confess—let me hope I can yet blush ingenuously—I confess the idea is my own. Drink and pass judgment; it is from the land of the Burgundians, as I think they are called. . . . Dear friends, I am very sensible of your kindness. I fear I can challenge but little glory for myself. Our fathers would have called it a gracious inspiration from on high. Myself I should suggest it as Aristotle's ἀγχίνοια — that insensible communion between the soul and the side-dish that leads a man of

refinement through happy hypothesis to exquisite accomplishment. 'Tis so the lover hits that tint of ribbon that suits alike with his mistress's desires and her complexion. Believe me, I am more than repaid by the contribution to gastronomy and your expert appreciation. And, after all, we must not forget we owe something to Gaius Cæsar in the matter. I could hardly have served this wine with *hors d'œuvre* had he not opened up the country that nourishes it. He plays Achilles furnishing the raw material for my Homer. Yes, friends, I trust we can differ from him in affairs of State without losing our gratitude for the enrichment of Rome. And stay! There is yet another boon we owe to Cæsar. Dama, serve the oysters. Gentlemen, I ask you to mark these oysters. Do they bring you tidings of Baiæ? No, indeed! Gentlemen, these are barbarians from the new land of Britain. Trebatius sent me them; he hymns them for exquisite beyond all sea-fish. They are the first that ever lay on a Roman table. Have I tasted them? Dear brothers-in-arms, I hope I know the order of comradeship better. Now to the great experiment: hold your white wine of Burgundy unscabbarded by your side. Ah-h-h! Ah-h-h! O great gods, all thanks! Ah-h-h! Adorable!

What grace! what geniality! what intimate suggestion! Gentlemen, I think we may drink the health of our Cæsar. He is a very great man.

Yes, indeed, he is gifted most divinely. Every despatch heralds a new victory; he has eclipsed us all these many months. I beg your pardon, Quintus Catulus? No, indeed, I cannot allow that. There I think you wrong him; I have not followed his campaigns, but I cannot call them a mere aping of my own. Yes, there is certainly much likeness between his operations and mine against Tigranes; I should be affected to deny that. And as you say, I had the good fortune to be first. But Cæsar's fame has quite blotted out my poor inscriptions. Oh, my Quintus—but do try the becaficos. And that Massic is as old as yourself. Yes, that day I charioted behind the white horses up to the Capitol with all the towns of Pontus in effigy before me—that day I do own I thought I was to be of the great names of Rome. I was yet in the prime vigour of my years. I had pushed further abroad than ever Pompeius went, and who else was there to be named beside us? The laurel tingled against my ears, and shut them on the remorseless *Memento mori* behind. Yet what am I to-day but dead? Dead! Who

ever names Lucullus now? No, my good Quintus, it is too late to awake now. More wine, Eubulus. Yes, yes, my friend, I know your scheme. I am to lead an army into Parthia—is it not?—with a special commission to win back the eagles of Crassus. Certainly I know the country and the warfare. I should take the line of Armenia; that was poor Crassus's fatality, to plough through Mesopotamia. Yes, I think I could do it. And my army would, as you say, be a check on Cæsar, who is certainly growing too great for the Republic. But no, my dear Catulus, you must not press me too hard. You must not set too hot a fuse to the ambitions of an old soldier who knows what it is to thank Jove in the Capitol. Give me some more ortolans' tongues, Matho. No, dear friend, you must spare me. Give an opening to some of our younger men. Believe me, there is none more zealous for Rome's weal than your old companion, but we are getting past our day, and must look to the young. Fill Quintus Catulus's cup and my own. What, you will not? At least try the pheasant. Ah-h, it is delicious, delicious. Where is Cæsar now; has any one read the last despatch? Eat and drink, gentlemen, I beg you. We must not suffer our anxiety for the Constitution

to impair our appetite. When Rome calls on us she must find us fit in body to serve her. Here is blackcock with your own sauce, Hortensius. Yes, I think we are all sound for the Constitution here. I give you the Constitution in a bumper.

What, are you leaving us so soon, Quintus? Keep your seats, dear friends; here comes the boar. Seasoned and sauced mathematically, is it not? And how it whets you for the Chian! Larger cups there. Yes, I fear the Republic is on the very edge of ruin. They'll overthrow it—they'll overthrow it and strangle the darling before they're done. What can we do? Dama, you Cappadocian eggplum, the sow's paunch, quickly, quickly. Ah! this slides down, doesn't it? No; we've done what we could for the State, and now there's nothing left but weeping. I weep, gentlemen; do you not see I weep? We shall all live to see Cæsar tyrant. Gods, that we should have lived through into such heart-piercing times! Gods, that we might have back our youth! I suppose I should be the first to help our trembling mother, were there but any way. Mix me my salad. Let any man show me a scheme, and he will find me foremost of all. Mix it generically, generously, monstrously. Mix it. . . . Olives and

treacle, garlic and pepper, tunny fish and peaches. Don't leave anything out. Now, gentlemen, here's a health to—a health to what you like. Don't you care for my salad? Have you too deserted me in my old age? Falernian here, Falernian in oceans! O, gods! I weep again; see how I weep! The poor Republic! Tears blind me, sweet friends; I can't see you. Where's Dama? Dama! Dama! O, there you are. Dama, what did I want to say to you? See how I weep! Dama, I drink to the rejunasc—— I drink to the rejuvenescence of the Republic. Dama, why do you have mayonnaise-coloured hair, you Cappadocian eggshell? You Cappadocian eggsh—— plum. Oh, Dama! Dear, dear Dama. . . . U-u-uck. . . . Dama, whipping-post, why d-don't you come . . . when I call you? Ser—serve the emetic.

CÆSAR

IT is too much grace, good sir, that you desire to speak with me. But since you are so desirous your fate lights back on your own head, for I am a terrible talker. I am Gaius Julius Cæsar, at your command, Dictator and Tyrant. And I am to be assassinated this afternoon, but with that I will not weary you. You must not take me for presumptuous if I am too much Gaius and too little tyrant. I must confess to so much stupidity that through all these years I have never been able to make a well-mannered despot of myself. I almost begin to believe that what they say of me is right, and that I am no true Roman gentleman after all. For my greater humiliation I must tell you, all the other tyrants—for after all we're all tyrants in Rome—bear themselves so decently. It will astonish you, my dear sir, to see what an irreproachable tyrant is the noble Roman. I often walk and wonder to myself what under heaven a Roman gentleman is fit

for, except to conquer when somebody else has divided, and then make an elegantly periodic defence of himself when he comes into court for extortion. Now I am on the point of righteous assassination, I see it was Nature's scheme that Romans should set the tone to the best society of Hades. All these Celts and Germans, now, whom we killed in Gaul, will spend their whole day and night in nothing but drinking all round and hacking at each other with claymores. They'll be inconsolable because they're definitely dead and can never be killed again. But the Romans—O these dear fellow-citizens of mine! — well, now I look forward with great interest to meeting my old friend Bibulus again. Twenty to one I shall find him composing an argument to demonstrate that my proceedings when I was Consul were of the most flagrantly illegal, and brutally revolutionary character. Which, I admit with shame, is but too true. Indeed, he was too ridiculous, that stately old Bibulus. First of all, he must shut himself up six months or so in his handsomely appointed town house, and look for signs from heaven: I, meanwhile, demolishing the Constitution some twice a day. Then when the war came he sprang up so zealous for well-established government that he

went out into the cold air and took up as an admiral. Of course the unaccustomed exertion killed him. But he doesn't mind that, because I was certainly acting against all the precedents. And he'll prove it, too, to the satisfaction of every jurist in the place before he's been a ghost many centuries. And I suppose it will be my Tartarus to listen to him.

Oh, but it has been a fine thing to be a Roman after all. Setting quite aside the limitless entertainment provided by the other Romans, there is no other State in the world where you could do as much. There's no place where they will lend you so much money and so many legions to win it back with. You march all over the world, putting it straight. You make laws and speeches and love, and drink the native wine in every land on earth. Our world I mean, of course: in your India you must know a deal that we are still waiting for. I'll match myself with you at hazard or sword and buckler or constitutional law or anything else you will, but when you begin to speak of the geography of India, no. I always had the fancy myself to take a couple of legions and cut across Germany, or right up along the Nile, or some such adventure, where—Ha! . . .

I must beg your pardon. It is such moments

that make me despair of myself as a tyrant of breeding. That lady is Servilia whom at the bed of my heart I have loved all my life. I suppose you will have met her son. Poor Brutus—and the absurd boy is going to kill me this very afternoon. I was talking to you about the delightful Romans. I wish you could only be in the Senate House three hours hence when they all come round to stab me. I can see it already—the gentlemanly unconsciousness with which they stroll up, fumbling at their poignards and trying to look as if nothing were on foot. Then the dandy assassins begin solemnly to assassinate me. It will be quite intolerably funny. If they don't split my sides with daggers I shall have split them myself with laughing—if only I have had time to notice it duly. There will be Casca—I doubt if he ever had a dagger in his hand before last night's rehearsal—doing his very damnedest to keep off the point of my pencil and yet show the senators that if he isn't much of an orator he's quite unsurpassed as a tyrannicide. There will be Cassius trying to look as if he was very fond of me, and only stabbed me as a public duty—also wondering if he'd get his province all the same next year. Then there will probably be the other Brutus striking out large, and scoring everybody's toga

except mine. Yet I've seen my friend Decimus hit straight enough in that hot corner with the Nervii. And he remembers that moment as well as I do now. Trebatius ought to be rather good too, looking up at the statue of his revered leader and quoting Euripides on tyrannicide. Altogether, the affair promises the most magnificently tyrannicidal spectacle you ever saw. There is the shining marble, and the tumult of venerable white gowns for the background. The worthy senators have read in the history books that the founders of our Empire used to break up the benches on such occasions, and take my word for it they'll be making conscientious efforts to follow the tradition. And then dear old Brutus standing decorously through it all, fearfully ashamed of himself, and murmuring "Junius Brutus" and "tyrannoctonus" all the time, to hold himself up to the work. I am willing to undertake, though, when he does strike he'll strike home. Yes, I love the boy, with all his egregiousness. We must not judge men too harshly, even philosophers. But I'll bet you three talents out of my estate it takes at least three minutes by the water-clock on the table for seventeen champions of liberty to bring down one elderly tyrant!

Have them all arrested? Why? Why do I

walk in to the shambles? Because, my good sir, if I'm not fit to walk about Rome unarmed any more I'm not fit to walk about at all. They kill me because they don't want me, and if they don't want me I don't want myself. Do I regret it? Yes, naturally. I was just beginning to get Rome into some order. Every one must be sorry to die when he is in the middle of a piece of work. Though, for the matter of that, having to die, you may as well die in the middle of one piece of work as of another. I did want to see Parthia, I confess, and also I was to meet Cæcilia this evening at supper. But of course I knew quite well they would do it sooner or later. All I had to do was to wait on their pleasure. Antony suggested a few of the Tenth for a body-guard, but I couldn't be bothered to have them always about with me. Besides, I should only have been killed all the sooner then, and the body-guard, too. Oh no, I've no reason to complain. Look round at all these ladies and gentlemen. There's not a woman of them in Roman society that I have not kissed, and not a man I have not pardoned. My luck I say nothing of: any man can be lucky if he tries. Then again—but indeed, my dear sir, I must entreat you to pardon me. I told you I was a most terrible talker. I have wearied and

wearied you; now you shall weary me—if you can. Tell me about your country. I have been able to see so little of the East. Come—your laws and your latest tactics, your wine and your women, your hounds, your finances, your arts, and your religion. You must have poets and orators! But I am like a famished campaigner trying to eat, drink, and sleep all at one time. Forward, then, if I may presume to ravish a kindness of you, succinctly and in order.

BRUTUS

YOU name me right. I am Marcus Junius Brutus, a Philosopher and a Noble of Rome. I think I have no reason to be ashamed of saying this: in all my life I have stained neither the one appellation nor the other. A just estimate of self is the true modesty, so that I do not hesitate to say that in all the cases of my life I have borne myself like a Junius Brutus and like the friend of Cato. To him that can generalise with discernment, as we say in our Schools, one example out of many suffices. You will know, Sir, if your memory goes so far back, that I went out with my father-in-law the Proconsul into the Province of Cilicia. Appius was grasping and greedy, and his train was like him: common men—you have not forgotten your Euripides?—will ever follow in the footsteps of their betters. But was it therefore for me, the Stoic, the friend of Cato, to wring gold out of the starved blood of miserable provincials? I remembered that they also were

men, and I held my hand and kept it clean. Let him who will bring me to trial for extortion; I can defend myself. My conscience is clear and I am not a raw pleader to lose my head before a jury. You have not forgotten—may I dare to hope?—my successful defence of this same Appius? Yes, I am a Philosopher, but no man can look me in the face and say that in the philosopher I ever sank the Noble of Rome. He that cannot be stern, our Zeno said, cannot be merciful. Was it not I that lent two hundred talents to those wretched bankrupt Salaminians at forty-eight per cent? Did I blench when it came to demanding my due? No, indeed: I withstood Marcus Cicero himself, a Consular and the Governor of the Province. He stood on his edict that he would adjudicate on the basis of twelve per cent. as maximum rate. But I was right. For my debt, look you, was contracted under the edict of an antecedent governorship. I concede it was not the law for Rome: but at the time of the loan it was not against the law for Cilicia. We will come to that presently. I will go through the law of the point with you in all its bearings, and I dare to hope you will agree with me. Enough at present that I got my money. True justice, I have ever held, is the essential condition of

true generosity. To return to our proposition: I was ever a Roman Noble and a Philosopher. Throughout my public life—I will not put on the affectation of pretending that you are not familiar with it—I have upheld with constancy the doctrine of Zeno and the authority of the Senate. And how was I rewarded? The Philosopher disdains reward, you will say, and that is true: I have constantly disdained it. But how was I rewarded? Under the acts of Cæsar I became Urban Prætor with the Province of Macedonia. And how did the Senate support my claim to that Province? Let me put the whole matter to you, as constitutional law, as briefly as . . .

Was it not I that slew Cæsar? If you will allow me, I was coming to that in due course. I was about to explain to you the legal aspect of the Proprætorship of Macedonia. Do me not the injustice to think that I claim it because of my nomination by Cæsar, or on the armed occupation of the Province, or on any such irrelevant grounds. No one, I am proud to think, that knows my public life will entertain so injurious a suspicion. For Cæsar, as you know, acted illegally in his Consulship as long as fifteen years before the question of the Proprætorship came up. He had no right in law

to bring measures before the Assembly while Bibulus was watching for signs from heaven. That it was impious and unbefitting a son of his ancient family, I pass over in so far as this argument is concerned. But, as I need not tell a man of your learning and probity, it was also rankly unconstitutional. The other points on which Cæsar set himself against the authority of the Senate I need not detail to you. You will remember how just before he crossed the Rubicon he set himself in flagrant opposition to the senatorial decree that bade him disband his legions. Further, he got himself unconstitutionally named Dictator in the first year of the Civil War: for you must not suppose that the case of Valerius Lævinus in the Second Punic War affords any precedent for the nomination of a Dictator on the unauthorised initiative of a Prætor. Now, this opening illegality invalidated all the after offices that Cæsar held, since they all rested, constitutionally speaking, on the transmission of the same auspices. Is it not Æschylus who says that one wickedness is the parent of a thousand? Well, then, Cæsar, for all his legions, nominal Dictator, almost King as he was—and how I thank the gods for averting at least that shame from the long story of Rome!—Cæsar, I say, had no more right to

name me for Macedonia than I had to name him. So far, so good. But I rest my case solely on the decree of the Senate enacted two days after the Ides of March. At that sitting, if you will follow me, it was . . .

It was I that slew Cæsar? Unquestionably: I glory in the deed. I am a tyrannicide—tyrannoctonos, as the Greeks put it; and I am not ashamed if all men hear it. Was not my ancestor Lucius Junius Brutus a tyrannicide too, and was he not the first Consul of the Roman Republic? I do not think we need seek a better precedent than the very first Consul of the Republic. Yes, I killed Cæsar, and I am proud of it: not only because of my ancient name, but also because of my philosophy. You must not imagine that our School holds with murder. But circumstances, says the divine Aristotle, alter cases. It was not the Man I bored to the heart under Pompey's statute; it was the Tyrant. As he fell he gave me a look that revealed all the mystery . . . But these are trifles. I should, of course, have preferred to act under the order of the Senate. But I have explained that Cæsar's position was absolutely illogical, illegal, indefensible. If you like I will go back a little. In his Consulship, as long as fifteen years before . . . You under-

stand my argument perfectly? Well, I confess that I thought I had made it fairly clear. But to resume. Cassius wished to kill Antonius also, but my position was this. As Consul, it is true, he had no constitutional status. But he held his Consulship from Cæsar as Dictator, and as long as Cæsar lived he had an implicit right to the insignia of the office. Then, said I, let us once kill Cæsar, and Antony's right lapses. Then let us see if he assumes consular functions, and, if he do, let us all waylay him and slay him also. And indeed, if there had been time between the Ides of March and the meeting of the Senate in which Cæsar's acts were ratified . . .

Portia? Yes, I was her husband. I divorced Appia in order to marry the daughter of Marcus Portius Cato. Do you not think him, in life and death, the most constant Philosopher of our time? It was a great glory to me to be the son-in-law of Marcus Cato. Tell me, is it to that, to my speech for Appius, or to my abridgment of Polybius, that I shall owe—you will pardon plain speaking—my evergreen immortality? But I am forgetting. You must pardon me. You will be anxious to have the remainder of my explanation on the Proprætorship of Macedonia. When, then, the Senate decreed two days after the Ides of March . . .

CICERO

GODS, how this litter jolts! You there, cannot you move more smoothly? You are shaking me all to pieces. Oh no; don't slacken speed, fools, whatever you do. Preserve the palanquin in a constant and equable velocity. How far are we now from Baiæ? Nearing the sea? What, we shall break on it in a moment? Thank—— O heavens, what a superb spectacle! Crito, my tablets! Quickly, blockhead, and don't thrust them into my eye, curse you. Nay, pardon, my good Crito, do not weep. I was hasty; in these times of stress, with the Republic poised, as I may say, over the profound pit, one may well be pardoned a little testiness. But I had no wish to be unkind. Do you think, Crito, the soldiers can be anywhere near? Ah yes, the tablets; now what was my thought? Strange, it has escaped me; let me hope I shall as easily escape the soldiers. That quip would please Atticus; I note it. But,

alas! my wit is failing me; if I get through I shall never be the same intelligence again. Yet if I have forgotten my own sentence, at least I can still remember my Aristocrates: *The misfortunes of the wise man are the renewal of his wisdom.* Ah misfortunes, misfortunes! Who has had more of them than I? Gods, that the foremost orator, philosopher, statesman, poet of Rome; gods, that the saviour of his country; gods, that Marcus Cicero should be jostled and jolted and battered and shattered in a litter, on a barren strand, with the hell-hounds of revolution and blood baying at his back! I that am the second founder of Rome! Just gods, if gods there be—nay, pardon, for I know you be, powers on high—requite it on Antony. And that too when I may say that if it was not my authority, my actual advice, that saved Antony from Cæsar's fate, it was at least my spirit of moderation. O the bloody miscreant! Can the soldiers be near, I wonder? Crito, do you see any soldiers? Any cut-throats, I should rather say, for in these days soldiers are become cut-throats, and Italy a cockpit, and the Republic a trull to be rioted for by bullies. Gods, that it has come to this! Gods, that the foremost orator, philosopher, statesman of Rome; gods, that the saviour of his country; gods,

that Marcus Cicero — but I am repeating myself.

O Hercules, my poor bones! Oh, oh! Strange, in these days I have come to speak almost wholly in apostrophe and rhetorical question. That cannot but be a vicious style; I must break myself of it. But Crito, cannot they carry the litter more equably? Go down off this rough ground onto the sand. If there were but a barque in the offing I would swim off like Marius. What am I saying? Like Marius! O shame! Surely Marcus Cicero is not yet sunk so low? Oh, in the gods' name, slaves, do not go so slowly. See, you sink in the sand at every step; up to the higher ground in the name of Jove. And courage, friends! brighter days will come for all of us. The philosopher must comfort the herd, but who shall comfort the philosopher? Hm, that is worth putting down; Crito, my tablets again. So. But indeed I have well-nigh forgotten my philosophy; I am well-nigh come to that pass that—that pass when; we must not be tautological even on the edge of peril—I am well-nigh come to that pass when I incline to turn and curse philosophy, my consolation and my friend. What philosopher ever stood up to defend injustice? None but the vilest of the

Sophists. And what have I done to be hounded over sea and land, as I am? Nothing but to love my country. Can I reproach myself with cowardice, with imprudence? If I had only not attacked Antony! Alas, now I see, when it is too late, that no citizen should take upon himself to embroil matters in the State. Alas, for those Philippics! Yet, why alas? Where is the orator of Rome—nay, saving Demosthenes himself—and may I dare say not saving very Demosthenes——

O merciful gods, the soldiers! O hasten, friends, hasten; never mind rocking me! To the right, into the coppice! No, to the left, into the sea—sharp! There may be a bark within hail, and you can swim off with me to it. O for heaven's sake go somewhere, do something! Stop; you are tipping over the palanquin. Zeus, the irresolution of these slaves! No, it is no use! They are all round us—they hem us in front and flank and rear. Throw me down and let me die. No, do not defend me; they are armed and you are unarmed. Soldiers—if soldiers I may yet call you; cut-throats would be . . . But no. Soldiers, you have come to kill me; and I will show you how a consular can die. But give me leave a moment—not, indeed, for prayers or entreaties or womanish tears, but

only that it is not meet that Cicero should die silent. Soldiers, you see in me a man, who, born in the sequestered municipality of Arpinum, of a sound stock, indeed, but unlustred—unillumined, let me rather say—by curule honours, yet, by the force of his talent, his will, his patriotism—may I not say his heaven-sent genius?—battled with the obstacles of what men call fortune, but far rather battled with aid of divine fortune, until, though he had detractors and envious foes — as who has not?—he mounted and mounted—Oh, for mercy, do not look so implacable! Did I ever offend you? No, you will say, but I loved my country. Yes; and for that crime I die. But I die of a stout heart. I defended the Republic in adolescence; I will not desert her in old age. Catiline's swords I contemned; I will not fear—Oh, not yet, not yet! Soldiers, have you no wives, no mothers, no aged sires, old men as I am, though not, as I, fathers of their country? Brutes! Stocks and stones and iron-cored rocks, not men! Well, I will show you how a consular can die, yes and a philosopher. Courage, Cicero, courage! What is it Aristotle says in the Ethics: *Properly speaking, then, the brave man is he who is fearless of honourable death and such things as* —oh, I have not the heart to finish! No, no!

One moment longer to draw to an end. Well, here then is my throat, and so it ends! Yes, fear not, man. Slice the throat that saved the State. Oh—h—h!

MÆCENAS

ONE, two, three—five men that call themselves my friends, all wishful to borrow money. Statilius, you will please to make a note of these five names, and to give orders that on no account are they to pass my vestibule again. The settlement of society under our Prince has done much to stamp out the dangerous classes, but we have not yet got rid of mendicants. I think it a little hard that after I have neglected my estate for half my life to expel roguery by the front door that it should creep in at the back. Did you enquire, Statilius, why my cook served white sauce with quails last night? Very well; I have made it a rule to deal with my people in person: send for him. It is not possible to maintain a household well regulated, unless the servants come personally into touch with the master. Plato, you served me last night a dish which, had any of my friends been present, would have shamed me for ever. As it was, my dinner was ruined. It

is incompetence such as yours whose ill effects Rome has struggled eight lustres to efface. You will be sold in the market to-morrow. Go. You see now, Statilius, the wisdom of my rule to permit no freedman in my household : all my servants are my own property. You will buy me the best cook in Rome in three hours. What, sir? You are a free man, and I employed you only to work at my pedigree and my library? True : I am satisfied with you. But understand that if I bid you litter my horses you will do it, or I sell you up to-morrow. Now, Sir, the best cook in Rome is Iulus Antonius's Dama : buy him. Antonius is a rich man? Very true, but I think we need not be afraid of that. We can tempt him, I imagine, Statilius. At any price whatever : do you understand? And not a penny more than he will sell at : understand that also. If he is stubborn, hint at my influence with the Prince ; that will be sufficient. Go.

Iulus knows that he is whispered against, and he looks to me to prop him up. I shall not do so. Again and again I have urged on Octavian the necessity of putting these malcontents out of the way. His father's son cannot but be a danger to a settled State, however soundly disposed himself. It appears to me that Octavian is losing his aptitude for politics,

and Agrippa exercises the worst possible influence upon him. This stupid, expensive system of banishment: it should never have had my voice had I remained in politics. Thucydides, I have told you once already I am not to be disturbed in meditation. The poet Horace is in attendance? Horatius, I think you mean; avoid these vulgarisms, Thucydides. Bid Horatius wait. Indeed I doubt now whether Octavian had at any time any real grasp of the principles of government. I was deceived by the facility with which he lent himself to my views. He is a man incapable of understanding any system between militarism and license. Of the finer arts of statecraft I am afraid he knows very little. How often have I explained to that man how the law of treason might be developed into an infallible engine of sound government! Yes: I was wise to leave politics, though Octavian is ungrateful to his Mentor. Well, I will see Horace. He at least, with all his faults, is a faithful soul. A man I have made.

Good-day, Horatius. I hope you are well, and keeping sober. Have you brought the work I commissioned? Very well; let me see it. There has been a very great improvement in your manner of writing, Horatius, since I took you up: the large P's are very much

bolder than they were. But what is this? This is not the Epistle Dedicatory I ordered. That comes second? Ah! yes, here it is; you should have given it to me first.

"Mæcenas, born of grandsire kings—"

Quite right: "grandsire kings" is very good. It is not, of course, literally correct, but one may, in poetry, fairly write the particular term "grandsire" for the general "ancestor"—

"O my defence and proud delight!"

"Proud delight." Now I think I shall correct that to "dear delight." I think the alliteration is well worth securing, and you may allow yourself a familiarity in literature, Horatius, where all men are equal, which, as I have no doubt you felt in writing, would be highly unbecoming in society. "Proud delight" does you credit as a man, my good Horatius; as a poet I permit—nay, I invite you to write "dear." "To hug the post with wheels afire" . . . the piece gets a little tame in the middle, Horatius . . . ah! what is this?

"But deign me so to canonize,
O'er highest heaven my fame will rise."

Yes, very happy. A very good ode, Horatius. You have distinctly added to your reputation.

I am very glad to note that you disavow that most dangerous tendency, which I am sorry to see is growing among some of my poets, to defer to the popular judgment. Even poor Virgil is tainted by it in this last epic, as he calls it. I am afraid he is coming to think more of the so-called glories of Rome than of his truest friends. Such defection on your part, I warn you candidly, I should feel very deeply. Now what is this other? I hope none of that Epicureanism which is such a handicap, if I may so phrase it, upon your best powers for good . . .

> " Ah, Postumus, how fleet, how fleet,
> The years slip by no prayers may stay
> Since beldame Age knows not delay,
> Since Death pursues with ruthless feet—"

I think you might have found a fitter name than Postumus; but it is very passable. I suppose you have verified all these mythological allusions in the Greek; it is not your industry I need ever distrust.

> " Your land, your house, your yielding wife
> Renounce; and of these trees you trim
> None follows, save the cypress grim,
> The lordling of the little life."

Yes, the tone of the work is quite good . . . And then—really, Horatius, you are too annoy-

ing—then you must spoil all again in the last stanza. I have warned you a thousand times against that, Horatius. Listen, sir, to what you say here—

> "He breaks your seals, the worthier heir,
> He sweeps your bins, the worthier lord,
> Dashing imperial wines abroad,
> While Pontiffs envy and despair."

Now, understand once and for all, Horatius, that I will not have such pernicious and disloyal trash as this put out to pollute the State. You say you meant nothing impious? Well then, I will ask you, Horatius, who is Chief Pontiff? The Prince; so I had thought. And then you say you had no intention of disloyalty? In that case I will merely answer that you have expressed yourself very badly. You will agree, I suppose —even you who were out with Brutus, when I understand you threw away your shield—that what we must all work for in Rome, is a settled social order? And I suppose that you are not incapable of perceiving that this is impossible without the maintenance of religion? And perhaps you may have heard that His Highness is supreme head of our religion? And then do you tell me, Sir, that you did not see that this last stanza—this Pontiff's ambition, or whatever it is—is pernicious in the highest degree? Now

this is what I shall do. I shall make you, Horatius, write an ode of fourteen stanzas in praise of His Highness as Chief Pontiff. Take your tablets and write down the heads of the poem, as I dictate them. First, the deplorable desuetude . . .

I beg your pardon: I think I was asking you to take down the heads of an ode. What, I? You say that I gave you the subjects of this one? Very possibly, though I do not remember: with the ode as a whole I am very well satisfied. You say I gave the hint of the Pontiff? Very true; I recollect it quite well, but it was not to be used, or wasted, in the spirit in which you have used it here. Perhaps, however, you meant it to refer to the Pontiffs of the old order, whose unworthy excesses I may have doubtless censured to you at some time. I could wish, Horatius, that your execution were on a level with your intention: you lay yourself open to a great deal of misconstruction. I think I shall substitute "late" for "while." What is that you are muttering about Minucius? I told you to glance at Minucius? Well, in one respect you are quite right. I do not remember that I ever spoke of him to you, but the extravagance of Minucius not only makes him a man impossible to be seen abroad with, but

constitutes a grave scandal on the pontificate. And I tell you, sir, I tell you that that man's insolence to his betters is more than any well-ordered State could endure. He has got the Prince's ear, and presumes upon it. Yes, you may hit at Minucius whenever you can, and as hard as you can. I am very glad I suggested that, and you have taken up the hint very cleverly. Sit down, my good Horatius; you must be tired of standing, and we men of letters are all equal, whatever our social position. I will read you a chapter of my own history that I threw off last night. You will remember, of course, what happened while I was Urban Prefect . . .

AGRIPPA

THE Seventh and Eighth, then, I think it had better be. Daren't leave a man less in Pannonia, and even so, I don't see what's to become of Upper Germany. I must work out a scheme of concentration for all the corps on the Rhine. If only the Prince would send the Tenth to Mainz; it's of no sort of use to him in Spain. But then I know what he feels about the Tenth. He can't forget the mutiny in his father's time. Yet I told him I've worked at the exchanges of that Legion till there isn't a man left of the mutineers. The last company I put in the forlorn hope at Alexandria, and they were cut up, God forgive me. How he can have borne to throw away such fellows—but how unjust I am growing in my old age! I've told myself so often that it hits him so much harder than me. Their ingratitude to Julius—what's that to do with me, the farmer's son? But it's all the world to do with him, and I don't blame him for not forgetting those men's

behaviour. I couldn't respect him and love him as I do, if he had. He's been forbearing enough to me about it, when I pestered him to move the Legion to the frontier. He shall hear no more about it, unless it's when I ask his pardon. I think I must go all round the frontier if he'll let me—Pannonia and the Alps and all down the Rhine; I might be able to do some good that way and put things straight against the trouble. For trouble there will be down all that line, and I'm not at all happy about it. I doubt it's all wrong, this encroachment on the barbarians. Pannonia was all very well when we wanted to keep our men hard for the war with Antony. But if he'd listened to me after Actium . . . now there I am again! Isn't it natural in him, isn't it most honourable to want to add a new province or two, like his father? What right have I to an opinion about it at all? They're not my provinces or my soldiers. O, Agrippa, Agrippa, a swollen-headed old man you will die! The truth is, this city life don't do for me: it makes me lazy and conceited. And fat, too, confound it! I'm almost rascal enough to wish we had another war. Well, I'll go off to-morrow and all round the frontier. I'm certain he'll let me if I beg hard; it's little enough good I am to him here.

Eleven o'clock! The equerry ought to be here with the orders. These young dandies want a lesson in discipline and that's a fact; they'll all go to pieces next war. Here he is, though: I was too quick to blame him. Good-day, Messala. What's the news from head-quarters? All those papers; what are they? The new census to be put in shape, eh? To be proclaimed to-morrow! Now be off, my boy, and don't get yourself late: good-day. Another long night for me, and these figures are the deuce. If they were only soldiers I could put a bit more heart into it. I'd better attack at once before they have time to demoralise my forces. Bah! what a useless old man I'm growing into! Gods, though, the population is shooting up: they are making up for the war time! And all these millions for the Prince to keep in hand! I wish I was only certain how it's all to end. They can't stand this monarchy for ever: they can't, I'm sure, wonderfully as Octavian wraps it up. How he carries it all through so lightly—no, I shall never be able to understand it. Yet I don't know. They all look prosperous enough, and the Prince always seems to be popular. But then, if a disaster were to come on the frontier—ten legions, say, locked up on the Rhine, and some bankrupt going round Italy

enlisting the Pensioners; and there go all our years of work! More proscriptions till the Senate is blooded white as veal. Yes, and serve us right. We had the example of Julius, and we choked the old Republic with our eyes open. I blush to this very day when I pass the statue of Scipio with my lictors. But it's not my affair either. It's Octavian that stands to lose everything, and he knows it. And he's so supernaturally cool and smiling through it all, that, by the Gods, I believe he'll pull it through. After all I only risk my own old head, and it's been staked so often that I suppose I owe Fortune a life or two. I believe he'd carry anything through that was ever done or dreamed of in the world. Still I think I must go to Pannonia and Germany; I shan't be easy till I have seen those recruits with my own eyes in quarters. A few months under canvas will pull me together. And Rome isn't likely to miss me. It isn't as if I had a part to play like Mæcenas; what wonderful talent that fellow must have, after all! Octavian says he's made a Roman literature that would have driven Pericles silly with envy. I can't quite make out that fellow Horace's things myself: he's a javelin throw or so above my head. All I know is, he went off double quick at Philippi:

yet he's a genial fellow enough, too. I've got no call to set myself up over his head; after all he knows a bit of soldiering, and I know no more of poetry than my charger. Let's see, there was that Ode they all said beat Alcæus—not that I remember a word of the old chap; despatch Greek's quite enough for me. How did that Ode begin? Bah, what a garrulous old fool I'm growing! I shall be curling my hair like Messala next. If I could only condescend to work at what I'm fit for . . .

Eighty thousand and sixty-three, and forty-two thousand eight, three, two, in the Mediolanum district. That's five, eight—no five, nine, eight, two, two—yes, a hundred and twenty-two thousand eight hundred and ninety-five. Gods, how they breed; this is our recruiting ground for the future, Transpadane Gaul. Then there's the other schedule besides. What's this? The Julia colony! Ah! the Julia colony; after my wife. They ought to breed there, if nowhere else. Yes, that should be a very prolific colony. O Heaven, I've sworn not to think of it, but it comes back to me and stabs me every hour of my day. I can't look at the census list but it grins up at me—Julia here, Julia there, Julia, Julia, Julia. The streets reek with her name. Does that damned

coxcomb, Messala, think I don't know that he's jeering at me while he pretends to salute? That I don't know that he knows, and all the world knows, which brothel my wife was pleased to patronise last night, and with whom? Curse them all, the mincing hermaphrodites, and curses on me that live through the shame! I, the master-cuckold of Rome—how shall I face my father below? He would have struck me dead in the furrow sooner. I see the slaves laughing behind the curtain—and I must pretend to be looking away. O ye Gods, let us have another war, another civil war, the Suburra greaves-over in blood, O good Gods, and proscription lists out on the Capitol! I would name nobody last time; now I shall want the whole list. Yes, I will wipe out every man in Rome that ever laid his tongue to my name and hers. They call me mild and moderate; they shall see. But what use is it? I must cut the throat of all Rome, all Italy, all the world before those talking tongues are stopped. It is too late; my name must stink for ever. O, if I could dash out my brains on these stones now, and no more. . . . Curses on her, curses on her mother and father, curses on every . . .

Ha! What is it? Where am I? What is that burning? Ah, yes! I was at work on

the census proclamation and it has fallen into the stove. What was it after that? I must have had another of those attacks. I must be careful; they are breaking me to pieces. But what was I talking to myself about just before? Ah, yes: I am killing myself with those thoughts and that madness. And I cursed Octavian, I cursed Octavian, my old friend, my schoolmate, the man at whose side I bivouacked in the sand of Egypt and the snow of Pannonia—I cursed the man that made me, the man without whom I should be clod-hopping in Umbria this very day. Miserable me: it is time that these attacks should be killing me. Some day I shall go mad, if I stay here, and then he will know it all. He that gave her to me out of his tender love, he the one man in Rome who still believes her innocent! When his fault was that he was too kind: for how should she, with birth and elegance and talents, have aught to do with a peasant and a drill-sergeant? I cannot blame her; she is what she is. O, I am punished for my mad presumption. I must go North; I must go to-morrow, if he will let me. All the family will be glad to see me no more: it is the royal family now, and who am I, strutting in the honours which it has grown up to think its due? Yes, I will go to-morrow. But now

these returns. Madman that I am, I have to begin all afresh now. No sleep to-night, and a very just penalty. No, Augustus shall never know; I will see him early to-morrow. The outpost camp-fire is my place: I should have been a centurion and never left it. I cannot even get these Julia figures straight in my stupid head.

AUGUSTUS

I AM late this morning. I can feel in the air the vibration of the third hour. Attius! Attius! I suppose he thinks that having lain so long, I may as well wait till to-morrow. Well Attius, have you, too, overslept yourself? No more dinners with Mæcenas: we are getting too old for them. It is the third hour; I will rise. But first request Livia Augusta to favour me with her presence. Dear old Attius! that little trick of telling him the hour never fails. Now for my daily bargain with the August. Madam, good morning; leave us Attius. And how is the Emperor? Judging from her roses, better than her lazy deputy. I spare you the encomium upon Mæcenas's wine. I saw last night a girl named Candidia; do you know who she is? O, the old senator's daughter? Not much like him; I should have said our late friend Mark Antony was a friend of the family. You know that? I thought she had a trick of him,

and I don't often make that sort of mistake. She's a very fine young woman, the white Cantonia. I suppose you know all about her; is she desirous of influence at Court? H'm Thanks; I trust you to awake her to the legitimate ambition of a Roman beauty. I wish, Emperor, you'd find a Mæcenas to renasce Roman women. When Candidia stands up you can see she is standing on her legs, and, except a certain perennial Emperor of mine, I can't say as much for any woman else in Rome. Will you see about it? Thanks, kindest of Junos. Now, another matter. You must see by now, Livia, that it's impossible for me to let Tiberius go on any longer as he's doing. You must let me send him away. Yes, yes; I know all you've done for me, but it doesn't justify your son in studied insolence. After all I'm supposed to be Proconsul and Pontiff and Augustus and all that, and I can't let him do it. Claudian pride? Well, I can only say that there's no vacancy for Claudian pride in Rome just at present. Eh? What has Candidia to do with Tiberius? O, I see: you want to bargain. Very well: Candidia for Tiberius — only on these conditions. First, you must talk to him seriously about his demeanour—not as coming from me,

you understand. Secondly, I put him on the list for foreign service. O, yes, you can make your mind easy. He shall have a big war, and a triumph, and all the fandangles. Also I'll throw in Agrippa: he shall go abroad and have no triumph, and I'll try to keep Julia quiet. I'm a generous Jove—eh, Junicula? Give me a kiss, old wench. We've had some battering times together, eh? Eh? Eh? Adieu, my Empress. Send in Cleobulus, will you? And don't forget Candidia. . . . H'm. My excellent spouse was pleased with my little attentions. Also she was pleased with the idea of her Tiberius in high command: she doesn't yet understand the value of interior lines in politics, my Augusta. I suppose she foresees her Tiberius crossing the Rubicon while we all sit tremulous in Rome. And yet she's seen the Prætorians at drill every day these many years. Naturalists have greatly neglected women. Now, Cleobulus, my wig and the eye-brightening stuff. I always assume you don't give away these secrets of the toilet, Cleobulus. If you do, the next wig will be the scalp of one Cleobulus, mysteriously disappeared. Now the gown. Not that, you nincompoop of genius. How often must I tell you I'm only plain Proconsul? That will

do: now announce me at the *levée*. I wonder who's here to-day. I'm glad the Roman Senators haven't the political insight of that hairdresser.

Attius, precede me into the ante-chamber, while I have a look at the company. Gods, what an air the rogue has with him. And how very right he is, considering the way they grovel to him. A poor set of curs, I'm afraid, these nobles at Rome; yet I'm afraid I like them. Good-day, gentlemen. I fear I have ill repaid this courteous attention by keeping you so long awaiting. Ah, Isauricus, my dear old friend, this is too kind. Too kind: it is I that should be calling on you; you must not expose yourself to this morning air; all Rome is waiting for your speech on this new Land Bill of Agrippa's. By the way, Egnatius, I do not think you have yet taken the public into confidence as to your attitude? You reserve it? Ha! I am not sure you are right, if I may say so. One loses great part of one's due influence, I always think, unless one gives an opinion time to percolate, as one might say. I have told Agrippa frankly all along that I shall oppose him on the municipal clauses. What says Piso? Opposed to the whole scheme: you will speak, of course? Aha,

good-day, Iulus. What says Iulus on the question of the hour? An excellent measure all round! So—well, it should be an interesting debate, and personally I am still open to be convinced. And here is the author of all the trouble himself. How do you do, Agrippa? Eh? A word in private: by all means, old man. Want to go away? No, no, dear fellow, we want you here. Pannonia and Germany? Nonsense, you're losing your nerve. Why, we settled the Pannonians years ago. . . . Well, we'll think it over. Morning, Mæcenas; survived your own wine, I see. Amusing fellow, that little Horace of yours. Underbred? No, I didn't notice it. I tell you what, though: if I were that man I wouldn't stand the way you treat him for five minutes, good as your dinners are. However, that's his affair. Been here long? Overheard anything? I'm beginning to agree with you about Iulus. See me before dinner. Well, gentlemen, I thank you once more for the high honour you have paid me. I am afraid you spoil me with your indulgence, for I am now about to ask to be excused. You have put me in an important public position and I am anxious not to disappoint you. Adieu, my friends.

H'm. To-day's hypocrisy over. Not that

it is, though, for I have to play the hypocrite one way and another every minute of my life. I'm beginning to think it's a mistake to be a tyrant. It's exciting enough when you have to fight for it; but when you've got it, decidedly a bore. And unluckily the posing isn't the worst of it: the worst of it is that you have to suppress so many good fellows. Now I know Egnatius is guilty of the impiety of not seeing why he should do what I please any more than I should do what he pleases. I must get rid of him: I can't help myself. Such a witty, astute fellow, too, and what a boxer! Iulus I must get rid of too. I fancy Mæcenas has got his own reasons for wanting Iulus out of the way; still, he is his father's son, and never quite safe. A man I've known since they first put me into the long gown! No, I shan't get rid of Iulus: he can go to Gyarus, if Mæcenas likes. No, damn it, why Gyarus? He won't do any harm at Rhodes, and at least he can get a dinner there. Poor old Iulus! And poor old Agrippa! I suppose he wants to go away because he can't stand Julia any more. I should never mind that sort of scandal myself, but some men do. Perhaps I was to blame in giving him Julia at all, knowing her character. But she had

to marry somebody, and that somebody could be none else than Agrippa. Such is statesmanship! Now the poor old boy wants to go back to his soldiers. But I can't do it. Once he gets to Pannonia, he'd forget his obedience —and he is most astonishingly obedient—and go for the chiefs. His loyalty's splendid, but I can't trust even it, when the old war-horse sees the enemy in front of him. And the worst of it is that the chiefs ought to be smashed this summer, and no man in the world could do it so well as Agrippa. It would be all over in a month. But Pannonia's got to be nursed, for Pannonia's to be a big thing, and Tiberius is to get his triumph for it, sulky dog. Yet he's got the stuff in him, too. I suppose I'd better make up some reason to send Agrippa to Gaul again: Livia can't object to him there. After all, the real devil of it isn't being a tyrant, but being a married tyrant. There isn't an easier or pleasanter thing in the whole world than to go on as I'm doing now, and keep my place to the end, and my friends into the bargain. It's this cursed dynasty business, and that cursed woman—though she's behaved a deuced deal better to me than I deserved. But why in the Gods' name must I turn out my oldest

friend to die miserable in Gaul? Why, to make the way easy for a moody young prig that I dislike—and who hates me. What do I get for it all? Candidia! That's what it comes to, when you work it out. I'm monarch of the world, and the gain of it is that I have unequalled chances of making a ridiculous old goat of myself. I wish to the Gods I'd had my uncle's pluck: then I should have been cut to pieces ten years ago. Still after all, Agrippa's going to Gaul would be a way out of the Land Bill business, and I begin to think I went too far in that matter. Yes: he had better go.

CALIGULA

CLCK, clck! Get on, Caligula, get on. O time, time, I shall never do it; I shall be too late—too late! Stop, time; stand still a minute! Oh, but he won't stop, and the—— Come up there! Houp, houp, houp! . . . All alone, and what am I doing? What is it? Now or never I must do it. But must do what? Hallo there, slaves, why am I left alone? I desired to be left alone? I came to Baiæ for solitude? You lie, cur! Is it I you will leave alone, when I might desire to say something? Execute four slaves—no, not four; wait: four fourteen, fourteen four, four—execute fourteen! Who is here worthy that I should speak to him? None but the captain of the guard! Send hither the measly captain of the mangy guard! . . . You there, come no nearer! Who are you? The captain of the guard? Stand still there at the other end of the room, and don't move! Do you know I could kill you to-day or make you a god, if I chose?

Very well. Now listen, but on your life keep my secret! Hush! I am looking for pebbles. I want them to play at soldiers. They make famous soldiers, pebbles. Much better than lousy damned privates of the line! And why? Look you here, and on your life keep my secret. Remember I'm the most thundering great conqueror of all the world! Now what does a conqueror conquer with! Legions. And what are legions? Men. And what are men? Dirt and chickens, fool, and no tools for a heaven-topping conqueror. Gaius Caligula can plan, but how can Marcus and Publius and Quintus—penny slaves—how can they execute? That is the curse of living with men in a twopenny world. But pebbles! I don't find that so with pebbles. Pebbles do what you will. They're never tired, they're never hungry, they're never mutinous, they don't run away, and they never ask for pay. And fight! You should see my pebbles fight—Caligula's pebbles. I'll conquer the whole world with pebbles. I know there are great empires; beyond Germany and India and Ethiopia there are; I know it, and whole tablets and slabs and obelisks of glory. I say there they are, waiting for me, and I'll get it all. But the devil of it is, you—what's your filthy

name?—the devil of it is, I've got no pebbles. I didn't bring my own pebbles with me; they're left in Rome. I must find some; I must find some and pick them up and drill them. And quick! Ha, you dog, do you dare to move? Yes, you are very nimble to get me pebbles, and very clever, ha! You'll go and pick me up mutineers and traitors: O yes, I know you hounds. If you move hand or foot you shall be crucified in two minutes. Look out of window at the cross; it won't take long to wrench him off and nail you on. But pebbles I must have. If I don't they'll come and kill me, those empires. Here, pebbles, pebbles! O gods, they'll cut me all to pieces before I can so much as drill a bodyguard. And there's nothing here but polished, cursed marble. Pebbles, quick, or I'm dead, I'm dead! O pebbles, pebbles, pebbles! . . .

You there, you dog! Who are you? The captain of the guard? Idiot, there's no guard here. Hush! How did you get into Olympus? Over the wall or by the fish pond? Quick! I want to get out. I am Jupiter, Best and Greatest, and I can't remember where I put the key. I want to get down to Rome; I'm Emperor there, and if I lose four seconds they'll ruin the whole game. Caligula they

call me there. They say there were other Emperors before, but that is a lie. Yes, a lie, a lie, a lie, I say, that they've put about to vex me. There were no Emperors but me; I won't have it so. Do you know how I govern my empire? Anyhow. You couldn't govern an empire, pig! If there were those other Emperors, they could not govern. But there were no others; I know there weren't. Now I govern with swords and sweeties. What is an empire made of? Subjects. How does a ruler move subjects? By pleasure and pain. Swords for the bad and sweeties for the good! A mere man might rule an empire by killing all the people of it, but it takes a god to know just the right rations of lollipops to serve out each holiday. Last time I gave three million and three, and executed three. I have to be very careful. If I gave one too few or one too many some historian fellow might get hold of it, and I never hear of it to execute him. I find it doesn't matter what kind they are for common men, as long as there's lots of sugar; what I have to think out is the number. And for senators they ought to be pink or fawn-coloured. O you villain: what did you do with the key? I say I want to get back. If I'm not back in Rome by sundown they'll find out I'm Jupiter

and kill me. Curse time, he's always racing ahead of me. Quick, the key, the key! O, Furies, the damned key! Mother, mother! I want the key, give me the key! . . .

Still there, you? Who are you? Have you my fiat to be alive? Stop! Did I tell you who I am? They call me Caligula, but I am not Caligula. They say I'm Gaius Julius Augustus, the grandson of that cad Agrippa, but I'm not Gaius Julius Augustus. And I'm not by Agrippa, I'm not, indeed. They say I'm Mars or Jupiter, but I'm not Mars or Jupiter. And do you know who I am truly? I am I! I! Do you understand? That is all—I. I am lord of the world; I am all things. I smell blood; I shed it. I see clouds; I blew them out of a bubble-blower. Venus is waiting for me; she is dying for love of me. I shall clutch her and bathe in the bottomless beds of her eyes, and sink my teeth in her flesh. She will scream with anguish when I embrace her. I shall tear her delicious body to cutlets and fillets, that none shall come after me. I do not want a daughter to perpetuate me. I am perpetual: perpetual am I! I shall pile up all the gold of the world and swallow it. I shall cut the throats of all the world, men and women and babies, and drink the blood. Then I shall

wax and swell till I burst through heaven and squash the stars like flies on the walls of space. Them I shall shove down outwards, and extend on and on, for ever and ever and ever. There will exist nothing, nothing at all; only I. Great, perfect, only, all I! Oh! I . . . I . . I . . .

CLAUDIUS

YES, L-Lepidus; you d-don't know what it is to be an Emperor. D-don't laugh now; I won't have it. Laugh at somebody else not your s-sovereign. I say you can't think of the bother it is. I wish my leg didn't itch so. Yes; l-looking at it historically there never was a more difficult position than mine. You see it comes down from Augustus—the d-divine Augustus. Try some of this patty; it's made of German g-goose livers. Good, isn't it? Excellent, excellent! Yes, the d-divine Augustus, you see, had to be d-downy. He didn't want the people to see how much power he'd really got. He was afraid of being pinked like his uncle. So he never took any sp-p—any definite office in the State, you know. So n-nobody quite knew what was the Emperor's p-prerogative and what wasn't, you know. That's been the difficulty with all his successors. We want a fixed constitution. Each emperor's afraid to g-go beyond his powers and afraid n-not to. I'm

the f-first Emperor that's seen that. I'm feeling quite hungry. So you see I get behind my favourites and wives so as not to be unp-popular. Pallas! Yes, I know he's an awful sc-c-rogue, but I like him. And the more a sc—the more a rogue he is, the honester I'll look when I come forward and supersede him. You see I'm not such a f-fool, Lepidus, hey? D'you know how they make these p-patties? They g-get g-geese and nail their feet down in coops so that they can't move, and g-give them fattening food. Then their l-livers get very fat. Curious, isn't it? H'm? What's that? The C-council coming? You must go then, Lepidus. Don't drink up all the wine. And b-be very careful about your speeches in the Senate. I won't have my p-prerogatives g-glanced at. Do you hear? I won't have it.

Oh, g-good afternoon, gentlemen. Get to business at once, please. Now—w-w-what's this? Who d-drew up this agenda paper? W-w-what do you mean by it, sir? "The private bill of Sulpicius!" "P-private bill" quotha? N-now you understand once for all, Pallas; I won't have these d-d-damned new-fangled words in my agenda paper. "P-privilege" was good enough for your grandfather if you had one, and it'll have to be g-g-good enough for you.

Now then, to work. Give me some wine. You d-don't know what it is to be an Emperor. When I said that to Lepidus just now he laughed. I'm g-glad to see nobody laughs here. Because I w-won't have it; is that plain? We come here to t-transact business. The saucy young monkey! We must keep an eye on Lepidus. What's that about Domitius? A traitor! You're mad, you blockhead. Domitius a traitor! You're mad, sir, mad, mad. This is superb, this pie. I should recommend you all, g-gentlemen, to send to the Rhine for some g-goose liver pies. Do you think Domitius a traitor, Pallas? Well, watch him, watch him! If he does anything pack him off to Gyarus. But gentlemen, gentlemen; come back to our business. W-what's this? I can't read this d-damned writing. P-petition of Afer to be t-tried by the Senate. What's he accused of? Extortion. Very well, then he shan't be tried by the Senate. Just write that down. I'll try the thief myself. And all you mark my words, I will not have the p-provinces plundered. I will not, I say, and let me see the man who tries it. M-mark my words; some day, and not very long forward, the p-provinces will be the b-backbone of the Empire. Now, gentlemen, before we proceed,

CLAUDIUS

I want to talk to you about a m-matter. I have resolved to m-marry Agrippina, my niece. You see, gentlemen, I haven't been f-fortunate with my empresses, so far. But Agrippina would be comfortable, and our imp-perial cares need soothing. D-don't you think yourselves she's a f-fine woman? Hm? What's that? Yes, she's a v-very fine woman indeed. We shall be happy to-together; don't you think so? Hm? I think so. I know it wasn't usual for our g-grandfathers to marry our aunts —to marry their nieces, that is—but why not? Hm? It's not b-bad because it's new, I suppose. It's a reform—k-keeps the family together. I should advise you all, gentlemen, to m-marry your nieces. Yes, I think it would be for the good of the Empire to marry Ag-grippina. What's that? My n-niece here? This C-council's adjourned—we'll finish the rest to-morrow. B-bundle out quickly. It bores her to see b-business going on. Now, be off!

Oh, g-good afternoon, Agrippina, is it you? I'm so g-glad to see you. It's so k-kind of you to c-c-come and see your lonely old uncle. Very kind, very k-kind, I'm sure. How's little N-Nero—b-big Nero I ought to say now? How the boy grows. Dear, dear, and who time flies!

Why, I remember when you were a little b-baby —and now look at you! Fine, sp-plendid girl you've grown. Why, I d-don't come up to your shoulder. You must sit down, I'm such a l-little old uncle b-by you. You were such a p-pretty little baby, with big b-black eyes, j-just like yours now, only you hadn't got b-black hair then or an eagle's n-n-nose. You used to g-give me a k-k-kiss when I came. You're too b-big to give a kiss n-now. Aren't you? Oh, give me a kiss. Give 'oo p-poor old unky n-nice kiss. Ah! Now again. Now make 'oo's n-nunky a lap—a n-nice soft, warm lap. Ah-h-h! Pitty, ickle sing. No, p-pitty big sing. Can hardly put arms round 'oo. Let nunky snuggle up, nice and comfy. B-black hair and white hair—that's p-pity, isn't it? When nunky s-stick his f-finger in 'oo's neck it make white patch. That's f-funny, isn't it? Does 'oo love poor old man? 'Oo l-love nunky velly much? Hm? V-velly, velly much. 'Oo marry 'oo's C-Claudius and be a 'ickle empress? Hm? 'Oo be n-nunky C-C-Claudy's p-p-p-popsy-wopsy?

NERO

BUT you cannot mean it? You cannot surely wish me to dispose myself in this unbeautiful hole? Regard it, how vulgar, how bare and malodorous, how nakedly undistinguished it is! Well, well; I can accommodate myself to necessity. After all, there is something piquant in the idea that the artist Emperor should take up his last—his ultimate halting in a deruinate lean-to. Aptlier 'twould have fitted me, maybe, to die a Sardanapalus death, lyre in hand, in satins of vert and violet, and the scent, I think, cassia or myrrh. Or else rocked on warm swan-down breasts—tickling exhalations—ah! Well, I must nerve myself. Furnish the cushions and the unguents. Furnish! Endymion, will you compel me to tautology? Endymion, Endymion, they are your charge. Speak, man, speak! Left behind? Yes, forgotten and left behind. And it has come to this; and it is thus, misshapen pig, that

you fail your lord in the flush of his infelicity! I had built at least on Endymion. Stab him, somebody! Aha, a terse stroke that! Do you observe how he snatches at each breath? Look at the little spasmlets in his feet as he stiffens. Do not shut the eyes, fool; that is the keynote of the whole impression. Look how the glance drains out of them . . . Ugh! If this straw would but be silent! How hellishly the rustle twitches in the ear! And there is an Alp of it under my thigh. It is the vengeance of the Gods, I suppose: they have observed that I cannot endure to lie uneven. How gravely the sun is going down before the dusk of Nero. The lyre! Quick, ere the colours change. . . .

> Now breathless tilts the Cyclops Day
> To naked Ocean's rim,
> Leans concupiscent to the waves
> That shall embosom him;
> Now whelmed in whitening, whistling steams
> His satiate flames expire:
> So leans, so burns, so steaming cools
> The blaze of man's desire.

Whitening steams! It is just the fluffy clouds yonder—the right jumping symbol. Look now! The trees and hills become more urgent: they

advance, they press upon you as the sun dies. It is a very swagger impression.

Yes, I have not lived for nothing. I have had sensations. Yet what a life to be tumbled into! To be an Emperor and a wit: what jest for the Gods! And what an hourly, implacable irony for me! The artist temperament —ah, the artist temperament, that asks nothing but the unlimited faculty of moulding the world into opportune impressions; that shrinks back from all things extimate beyond the repletion of each sense; that demands no commune with men, but as stuff for its beautiful exercises! And with that to be forked into a vulgar empire! It was something—I will do Heaven the justice—to have to poison one's uncle to get there. But the *frisson* of a moment is overburdensomely paid by years of omnipotent banality. Yet it is obscure how else I could have played my part except as master of all things. And assuredly for what I did my people should kneel and be thankful—such as remain. It was an obdurate fate for an artist to be nominated perforce a Hercules for the expurgation of the world, since art is a doner of one complexion, and the popularisation of art—how utterly other! No artist but must feel it; and yet no Philistine but

must confess that I strapped on my Nemean with a slash and a puff. I believe I selected my executions with some taste—yes, and with originality. I might indeed have put to death more of the middle class—but no; that, after all, is rather the province of the statesman. Yet Lucan: there was a bold pronunciament that the Epic is obsolete for an age that lives in the moment. And Seneca: we have outstript the days of expository morality. Burrhus, too: his full blood must have bubbled in the bath. I hated him; I was bored with seeing him eternally about; what has the ninth century to commune with a Marius? Then there was Thrasea: what a goose to cook! All those dreadful old Romans, a pox o' them! There was anachronic, scoundrelly lack of humour, to prate of old Roman virtue when all the fitnesses bellowed for new Roman vice. Yes, I have played my part well, and I have not gone quite unrewarded. There is not many a man can say he has signed with his own poet pen, in face of a crimsoned sunrise, the death-warrant of his mother.

And for this symphonous, callipathic, individual life they are going to kill me. Well, I may look for the one supreme moment more. I curl the nostril at death; but I

do not like being hurt. I think, perhaps, I will kill myself before they come. But not until they come; I have yet my antistrophe that beckons me . . . *Yet, ah! the East must warm again.* No; Catullus might have said that. . . . Ah, I have it!

> Yet Orient must fuse again
> And orange into flame,
> Onto unfathomable smiles
> Expectingly the same:
> Once more—

Ha! Hylas, did you hear that? Yes, it is. Listen again! Oh mercy, it is the pursuers! So now for a death worthy of me. Horses . . . horses . . . curses! All my culture gone just when I want it? Be a man, Nero. . . . Yes! *Pelting my ear it approaches, the clatter of fleet-footed horses.* It is staled, but it must serve for fault of better. Now, what else? . . . Oh, but Hylas they will kill me, will they not? Yes, they will kill me—kill me with biting swords and scoop me out in smoke and blood. O Hylas, run me through—run me through I say, my Hylas! Hylas! Quickly, quickly, run me through! Save me from them; I loved you; indeed I loved you! Forgive me if ever. . . . Oh, they are galloping, galloping,

Hylas! Now, now! They are dismounting; I hear the horses blowing, and the bits. Is there no one that loves me? Oh, on my knees, if I have ever charmed you with my songs. . . . Pah, detestable cowards! Now, Nero, to be strong: the true posture: straight through the heart, ha! No; glanced aside! Again, again, ha! No; I might miss the heart and the wound be curable. If they would but be merciful. E-e-e, they are forcing the door! Oh, the blackguard squint of the steel! Now! Oh, what have I done to end so wretchedly? Now—now—now! O Hylas, in pity! . . . Oh! Aa-a-h! . . . What an artist death to die!

VESPASIAN

WELL? It don't smell, does it? Money's money, I suppose, whether it comes out of sewers or rose leaves. Here, give me back my penny. Now look here, Titus, it's no use trying to play off your finicking la-di-da-dy notions on me! I'm only an old soldier; I know that as well as you do, and I bet you know it pretty well. But in my life I've learnt one or two things outside the drill-book, and I've learnt that business is business all the world over. Now they've made me Emperor here. I wasn't brought up to it—you know that as well as I do—but all the same I mean to pull it through. I don't talk anything about duty or the glories of Rome, and all that sort of fancy 'umbug they teach you cock-a-doodles in the schools of rhetoric. I tell you fair and square I like being Emperor: I like the laurels and the flunkeys and the kow-towing, and all the rest of it. It's all tommy-rot, you say? Well, I know it is. I know they'd all kick

me to-morrow if I was down. Only I don't mean to be down, and while I'm up I like to see it round me. And mind you, while I'm Emperor I mean to do the business and carry the thing through. And what's more I don't mean to be the loser by it; and you won't be the loser by it neither. Anything you call for in this palace you can have, and when I'm gone you'll be boss of a big concern. But don't you talk to me about 'igh-mindedness and all that boys' talk. I never was 'igh-minded. Oh, yes, you must have your *h*, of course; I can see how you go when I leave it out. Well, I never was high-minded, and I've done pretty well for myself without it, and for you too. And I tell you Emperor's a business just like any other, and I'm going to run it as a business.

Now, just you mark that word, my son. Business: that's what's made me what I am. You know how I began very well: I never hid it from anybody. Pa was a butcher, and as for Ma—well it ain't for me to speak ill of my own mother, but you know what she was. Well, I had to make my own way. I never flew in the face of anybody above me, like you young fools that think it's fine and manly. Manly! Holy Augustus! Principle, you call it! I say business is principle enough for a young man

beginning life. I stuck to my work, and because I did one thing well they thought I could do another thing well. So they set me to that, and I did do it well because I hadn't any flummery about me. I wasn't above it, or below it, or all round about it like young men are nowadays. Because I could command an army they thought I could command an empire, and here I am doing it. Doing it better than it's ever been done before, too, and making money out of it. Now, why? I ask you why? Why, because I never had an education, and work it as a business concern. Don't you tell me, young man. Why did all the other Emperors make such a mess of it? Now, you mark my words: I can remember the whole boiling of 'em and you can't. There was Tiberius: he was the first that took over the going concern. Well, he was a good soldier enough—better than me or you. But he was so afraid somebody'd pink him for doing the thing badly that he went off to Capri and never did it at all. Time enough somebody did pink him, say I, when he left off doing the work. Then Gaius: he was all for giving you jujubes one minute and chopping your head off the next; what could you make of an Emperor like him? And poor old Claudius: he was a well-

meaning chap enough, too; but he was always bothering his head about things that didn't matter—old law-books and that. A lot of good they did him, taking all his time while the scoundrels swallowed up everything all round him. Why, I can hardly spell through my law-books, but I know well enough when a man ought to be punished. And that Nero, the Greek fiddler—ready to strangle you if you yawned when he was squeaking out his damned wishy-wash! But I know my business, and I do it, and I make things go along. No, Titus, my boy, I brought you up well, and you've wanted for nothing. I've given you a good education, up to your station. But if you think you can keep this empire going when I'm gone without attending to business, I tell you fair and square——

What's that, you? Hand it here. *To His August Imperial Majesty: Petition on behalf of young Manlius.* No. Tell them no; I won't pardon him. I don't care who he is; he can be as noble as he damned likes. Regulations are regulations. I suppose he'd got his copy of the regulations, hadn't he? Well, it says there that the man who leaves his post against orders is to be flogged; and, if it was my own son, flogged he should be. Go and tell them

that. These young nobles of yours don't like me, Titus. I'm not their sort; I'm too much the man of business for them. Now you are their sort; I've taken care of that with your education. They like you, but I'm not fine enough for them. Well, I like them well enough, and I don't care what they think of me. And, mind you, they stand me better because they despise me. You don't find them getting up any of their conspiracies to kill me. They just leave me to do the work; that's all I'm fit for. Well, I do it, and I pouch the sesterces.

Now look here, my boy. Before the Senate meets there's one thing more I want to talk to you about. That Berenice. Now when I made you send her back to Syria, you did it: I'll say that for you. But don't you believe I can't see well enough you're peeking after the girl. Now you just take my advice and have nothing to do with her. Don't write to her or anythink. Why, Gods bless you! I know women well enough—know 'em these forty years in camp and out, and a warm time I used to have, what with one and another! You take my word, this girl'll do very well for herself in her own country without you. You can't marry her, mind you:

I won't have my son marry a nigger girl, princess and all as they call her. We know their twopenny-halfpenny princesses. And as for love—gammon, my boy! Do you think she'd ever have looked at you if you hadn't been the Emperor's son? Don't tell me, sir. I knew these Syrian girls before you were born. O yes, they'll kiss you and cuddle you when you're there, and maybe something more; then when you're gone it's the first—— Now don't fly out. I won't stand any——

You again? What the devil d'you want now? Senate about to meet? Well, I suppose I know that. I never was late at a meeting yet, was I? There, go away. Can't you see I'm talking to His Royal 'Ighness?

TITUS

I HAVE listened to you, gentlemen, with great interest, and it will be pleasure to me to lay your views before my august father. I can assure you at once he realises keenly, as I do, the desirability of reform in our sewers. I am further in a position to inform you that inquiries are even now being prosecuted to that end, and should various obstacles that immediately suggest themselves be found superable, his Majesty trusts and believes that, under Heaven, steps may be taken in the direction of such a reconstruction of the system as may attain far-reaching results and meet with the satisfaction and further the prosperity of all his subjects. Further than that I cannot at the present stage commit his Majesty. Speaking in my own name, I need not remind you, gentlemen, that our sewers represent a gradual growth spread over very many generations. The earliest, the Cloaca Maxima, goes

back, our historians tell us, to the dim days of Ancus. I am not able to corroborate this from my own recollection, . . . but if you have descended the Cloaca, as I have, and smelt it . . . you will agree that it can hardly have been constructed the day before yesterday. . . . Seriously, gentlemen, it is but fitting that the sewage system of Rome should be a wonder and a model to the world. We Romans, it appears to me, are pre-eminently a people of builders as well as of conquerors. . . . I have seen in Judæa . . . the kind of drainage that commends itself to uncivilized nations, and that sight, just as effectually as the glories of the campaign in which I had the fortune to participate, . . . made me yet more what I have always been—proud, and ever prouder, of the name of Roman. . . . Good-day, gentlemen, and many thanks.

What a damned fool I am! Five by the clock! Is Sempronius in attendance? Ha, ha, Sempronius, old man, how goes it? I saw Lepidus just now. The young idiot's got into a hole with his debts of honour. I sent him away with a wigging and a loan and good resolutions. Ripping good dinner the old pontiff gave us last night, eh? Jolly for you not to be heir apparent, and able to get as

drunk as you like. And, by Jove, you were drunk too! What? Oh, rot! You don't remember a thing about it. Do you remember hiding behind a curtain and popping out your head, first one side and then the other, and calling the old gentleman Ganymede? You did, I assure you. Then you got into a dish of olives, and stood on one leg, and offered to make a panegyric on Corale the dancer. That reminds me, Sempronius. Several people have come to me and said you talk of taking that girl into your house. Is that true? Eh? Real love this time? Hm! Well, my boy, I think you might have confided in me. I'm still Titus, however much my father's Augustus. But see, Sempronius, you can't do it. With your name and your family—a man who can be consul in two years and anything he likes afterwards—you mustn't do it. Yes, I know it hurts, but one's got to be hurt, and one's got to be worthy too. I don't know what I'm asking? No, old man, I don't suppose I do. I wish I could go through it with you. Yes, she may be all you say—I don't doubt it—but after all she's a Greek dancing girl, and Rome won't have it. Don't you owe something to Rome, that has always had a Sempronius to guide her since Hannibal? There

was a Sempronius for you who knew what was to be done with slaves. No, no, dear friend, you must give it up. Don't you think at all of your mother, whom you love so dearly and who's so proud of you? And don't you think just a little bit of me? Old man, it's Titus asking you—Titus that you cut out of the Germans by the Main ten years ago. You remember the dear old centurion's language when he found we were missing? Now Sempronius, dear old pal, stiffen your back! . . . Here, drink this; it's the old Falernian; that'll pull you together. . . . Now you will do it, won't you? You'll do it for everybody's sake. You will? Thank you, Sempronius. You leave me very grateful and very humble. Good-bye, good heart; see you on the circus to-morrow. . . .

I don't know what I'm asking! I don't know! O Berenice, Berenice! What was it I heard the old man say in Judæa? *He saved others, Himself He could not save!* Reason enough to save others when nothing else is left to do. And I go up and down this blasted city, and play the prince, and forget —and then I'm alone, and all my life tumbles apart, and everything's empty. Oh, and she never forgets. She never does anything in all

her life but remember. Berenice, my poor, poor girl! I can see you huddled on your couch all day, moaning and moaning for Titus. And you know he'll never come back. You wake in the morning and put out your arms, and you are bewildered just for one merciful moment to know why your heart sinks so deadly. And then you touch nothing but the damp pillow, and you know that there's another day to live. You will go on so, to-day and to-morrow and to-morrow, until the last of your life goes out with a sigh. O, what a wretch I am to love you; what a weak worm I was to leave you! That's what a goddess gets by blessing a mortal! And I haven't sent one word of love to lie with her these three months. I was going to use these tablets for the orders of the day; I think, perhaps, for once I'll try and be a man instead of a prince. *Berenice, my heart's love,* . . . No; I've always begun my letters that way . . . Oh, if I could but write! . . . *If the guilty slave may still dare*—That's pedantic. The difficulty is not what to say, but what to say first. . . . But why can't I speak straight out from my heart? Here goes. *Berenice,* . . . I feel such a scoundrel when I set to writing to her. And I am one too! *Berenice,*

. . . *Berenice*, . . . *Berenice*, . . . O gods, gods! What in all the world has happened to me! . . . My heart's all dry and wilted, and I can't squeeze out one drop of love. Oh, I know, I know very well. . . . I've lost my love—lost my love—dropped it out of my heart, and never seen it fall! All these days and weeks I have been talking, talking to myself about nothing at all. All words, and a dry heart inside me. Oh, what a whipped hound I am! No wonder if I set my country before my love! Why, I can never have known so much as what love is! Why did anybody ever love me? Why did they ever make me believe I was a man worth kicking? Now I know I've got no heart, and I found out before I've got no will, and I never had a head. Five and thirty years, and I've just got as far as this. And I must begin and build a self all up again before I can dare so much as to be alone. Hm! I was going to be the second Julius, but I don't think I shall now. I shall never be anything. There remains the letter. Rather a short one—*Berenice*. Lick it off, flames; and don't tell anybody what sort of man I am. . . . Hullo! six o'clock; I shall be late on parade if I don't look alive. My sword and helmet there! Then there are the

despatches for Africa. . . . Bah, it's my turn to want a drink now. Poor old Sempr—— No. He's been in love with that Greek leg-machine, present and absent, to my knowledge for five years.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

THIS is my city of Constantinople that I have established for the shrine of my everlasting homage. As the palaces sparkle in crystal on the waters, my city will shine lustrous for ever, mirror of my greatness. No man ever set up for himself such a remembrancer. It were little seemly for my glory that she should be less fair and strong and wonderful. I must have had her fair, and how fair and lordly she is! Her white terraces gleam upward from three seas that are her footstool till her cupolas lean on the hot blue heaven which is her canopy. I have jewelled her with palaces, and sanctified her with churches and armoured her with towers. The keys of all the seas hang at her girdle; she holds the threads of all the roads woven together in her hand. Her argosies pour out before her all the wealth of Thule and of the Cinnamon Isles. So sits she controlling the reins of North and South, East and West,

Queen of Cities and Empress of the World. She is my city, Constantinople, my palace and my mausoleum. And she can never be another's, for I have given her to my friend the Holy Cross. Not unto me, not unto me, but to the Holy Cross be all the glory! For I have done more than found this city—for found it I did, and no man shall take away the name of it from me. Men are jealous, and it may be they will talk in time to come of Byzantium. Would God Byzantium had never been! But I will make it as though it had never been: I will blot out the name of Byzantium from the world; I will suffer no man to share my just fame. This is my city—mine, Constantinople. But I have done more gloriously than this. Romulus built a city, and Alexander. But I have been Romulus to build, and Numa to give revelations, and Tullus to conquer, and Ancus to give laws. I have conquered by the Holy Cross, and I have made all the world bow down before my helper. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Cross. I have won the old world and made it new. It is I that have driven out the devils our fathers worshipped. I have delivered men's minds from superstition. This very morning I stumbled as I crossed the threshold; my

father would have turned pale; but thanks be to the Holy Cross I am come into a more excellent way. And yet I must take heed also: kings have been killed before now when they slipped by mischance. So now I have given my city to the Holy Cross, and it will be ours for ever and ever more. None shall walk its streets but he shall do honour to the Holy Cross and to Constantine for ever and ever more. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Cross!

I have sat on this throne nigh upon thirty years. Not one of the Cæsars before me ruled so long, and not one so gloriously. I have come prosperously through all things I have undertaken. Not the Div—not Augustus himself had a road worse beset than I. Yet something was always round me in the air, as I moved, that told me I should be great and magnificent beyond all men—even in the days when I was hostage with Galerius, ere yet I had the revelation of the Holy Cross. Ah, Galerius! how I hated the old man with his sharp nose and eyes aslant! How I schooled myself to be great enough in that court, and not too great! Ah! there is that jet of pain in my leg! Again! I fear it: it is growing in on me. . . . But Galerius himself could not keep me down—

no, nor any of them. I flung them all under me for foothold as I ascended—Maxentius and Licinius and Crisp—and the others that are dead. I have failed in nothing: the afterworld will find no smirch on my glory. . . . Ah, but Crispus and Fausta and those others! If I am Romulus and Numa and the rest, will not they call me Tarquin also, to be the executioner of my own kin? Oh, that would be too horrible, too horrible. Holy Cross deliver me from evil-speakers. . . . Can there be anything by chance that I have left undone to save me from them? I have had Eusebius and the rest to write my history as I will it shall go down; what is there more? If I could but live—but live until I outlived all men that ever knew Crispus!—then it might be utterly forgotten. And yet I do not believe they knew. The people thought he conspired; they must have held him rightly slain. And rightly slain, indeed, he was, and so were the rest. It cannot have been sin to kill them, else I should have been punished. The Holy Cross would have departed from me. I went on ever greater and more invincible. And my wife at least I strangled with my own hand, and no man knew how she died. No, I repent in no way. Repentance is for little men. And yet

I fear evil-speakers. Some day—who knows? —some day, I say, historians may write me down murderer to flatter some jealous Emperor in my dispraise.

But that I will not heed. Am I not prosperous in all ways, and secure? Secure! Security is hard for one who is very great. Yet I neglect nothing. No man may speak with me save through the chamberlains. When I go to pray on Sunday outside the gate of Adrianople, are there not my guards fencing the whole way? They are paid and fed and housed like princes: they shout for joy when they see me. And who could make himself great enough to overthrow me? My sons fear me because of Crispus; it was well done to give them that example. And my ministers—are they not perpetually warning me one against the other? And have I not the spies, and the spies on the spies? It cannot be that the spies deceive me; for their lives they dare not deceive their master. No, I am well served, and I am quite secure and omnipotent. And my fame can never die because with me has come the regeneration of the world. I have turned my back on the rude heathens, our fathers. Now we go forward to the new—the new city, the new government, the new dignities,

the new faith. All new, and I the great inaugurator! By Herc—, by the Holy—but it is written, *Swear not at all.* Yet as I think of all I have done, the very firmament seems too narrow and poor to enfold me. When that comes it is only in prayer that my spirit can make itself room to breathe. So now to prayer. . . .

Holy Cross, True Cross, encompass me with thy favour, even as I have been thy favourite heretofore. Give me the victory over all mine enemies: give me the keenness to discern and the swiftness to strike. Give me honour and renown among all men that shall come after me. O Holy Cross, hide, hide from them all things that might blemish me! Give me glory, glory above all the Cæsars. Keep my city—thy city too, Holy Cross!—to preserve my name for ever. And do not let them speak of Diocletian! Indeed, indeed, it was I, it was not Diocletian, the beginner of the new Empire. Holy Cross, wipe out the name of Diocletian from men's mouths for ever. And grant me many years yet to live on earth. Grant me many, many years, for my greatness and my glory are so grown about me I cannot leave them. And when I die, O Holy Cross, O True Cross, make it so that Crispus and Fausta and

the rest may be in Hell and I in Heaven. Of a truth they were heathens in their hearts: their homage was of the lips and their hearts were far from thee. Let them be in Hell, and let me have none in Heaven to reproach me and scowl upon me. And O Holy Cross—O heavens, that stab of pain again! It is gout, and it is going to my stomach. I know it. It killed my father, and it is killing me. O give me many years! Didst thou not reveal thy very self to me in the heavens? did not the very True Cross come to my mother in a vision? And wilt thou now desert me, and let me die so soon? In the name of the Father and of the Son—O gods—O God—again and nearer! I shall die, shall die! Where is my relic of the True Cross? . . . Gods, it is gone, gone from about my neck! O I am undone utterly! I know I shall never find it again. And I cannot tell my servants, lest they know I am without it, and defenceless, and they slay me. Holy Cross, I gave you the world: give me back my reliquary. I say I gave you the world, and you are my debtor. Alexander and Julius conquered without you: I could have done without you. And you could not have done without an Emperor to set you up over men. Now answer me!

Answer Constantine! Give me back my reliquary. O hell, again, again! O why am I all alone? Why is my city so white and blazing and comfortless? Curses on the vision of the Cross and curses on my folly. The old gods were kind gods that could hear man, and feel. But you are always hard and inhuman —O so callously, pitilessly inhuman! And this was why I tripped over the threshold. It is the old gods come to torment me with their vengeance. . . . And now I have blasphemed. O Holy Cross, absolve me, absolve me. Do not sink me to be roasted in Hell; keep thou away the devils with their pitchforks. And Crispus and his high eyebrows! Yes, and keep away Fausta; keep her away; her face was all black, and her eyes shot out. Restore me once more to thy favour, and keep the gout from my stomach. . . . But Constantine, Constantine, be strong; is it for the master of the world to be thus tiresome? But yet I shall go and pour a libation to Apollo. It will be safer so. Holy Cross forgive me the idolatry! I vow thee a new church for every new year of my life.

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